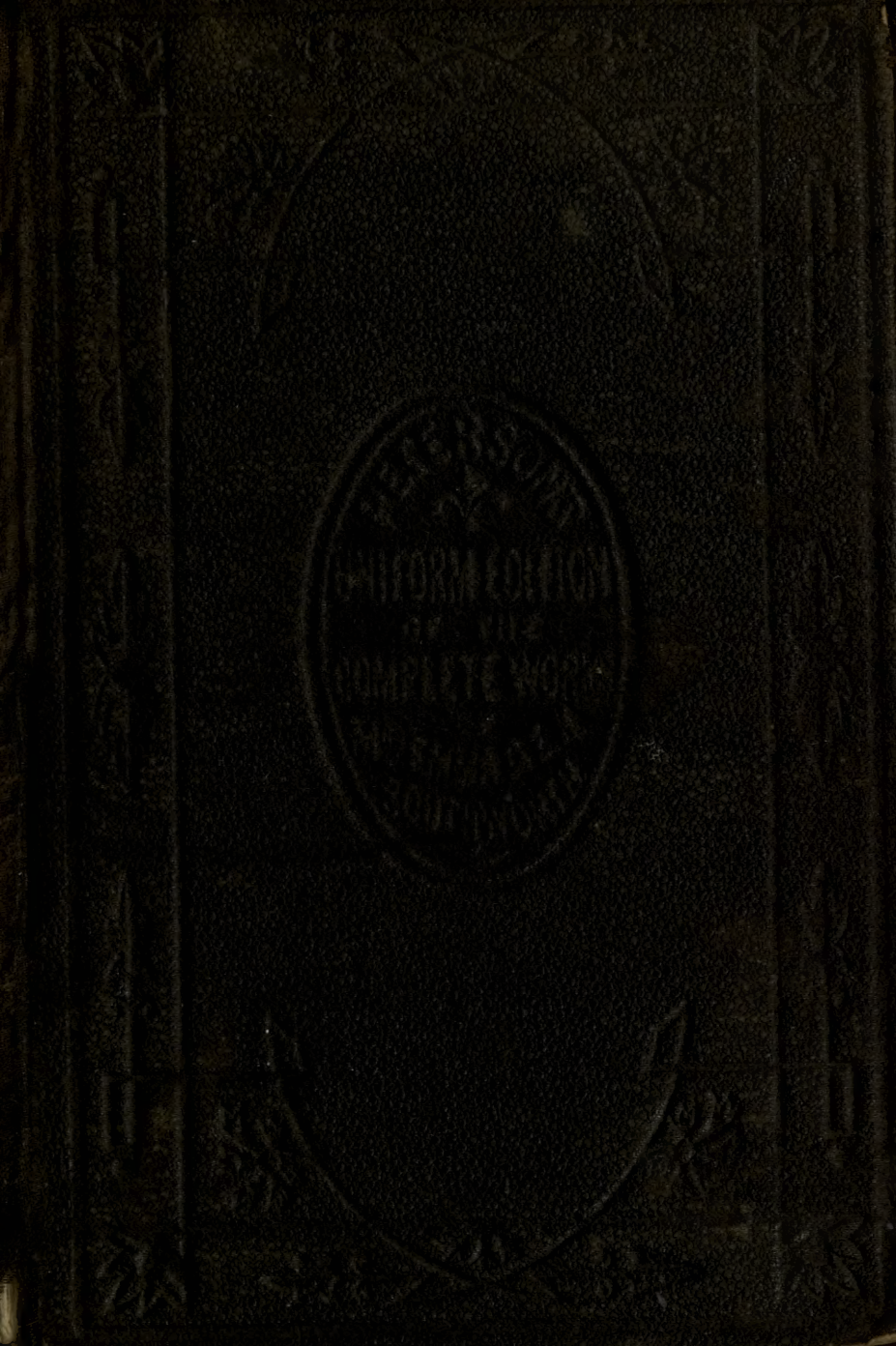

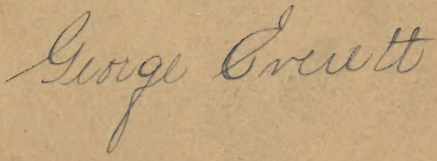

George Everett

THE WIDOW'S SON;

OR,

LEFT ALONE.

BY

MRS. EMMA D. E. N. SOUTHWORTH.

AUTHOR OF "MIRIAM, THE AVENGER; OR, THE MISSING BRIDE," "A BEAUTIFUL FIEND," "HOW HE WON HER," "RETRIBUTION," "CHANGED BRIDES," "TRIED FOR HER LIFE," "BRIDE'S FATE," "LADY OF THE ISLE," "A NOBLE LORD," "CRUEL AS THE GRAVE," "FORTUNE SEEKER," "ALLWORTH ABBEY," "LOST HEIRESS," "FAMILY DOOM," "THE ARTIST'S LOVE," "GIPSY'S PROPHECY," "HAUNTED HOMESTEAD," "FALLEN PRIDE," "VICTOR'S TRIUMPH," "THE CURSE OF CLIFTON," "THE SPECTRE LOVER," "MAIDEN WIDOW," "TWO SISTERS," "BRIDAL EVE," "FAIR PLAY," "THE FATAL MARRIAGE," "PRINCE OF DARKNESS," "BRIDE OF LLEWELLYN," "MOTHER-IN-LAW," "DESERTED WIFE," "INDIA," "DISCARDED DAUGHTER," "WIFE'S VICTORY," "LOVE'S LABOR WON," "THREE BEAUTIES," "THE CHRISTMAS GUEST," "VIVIA," "LOST HEIR OF LINLITHGOW," ETC.

"All the striving, anxious forethought
That should only come with age,
Weighed upon his childish spirit,
Showed him soon life's sternest page.
Grim Want was his nurse, and Sorrow
Was his only heritage."—A. A. PROCTOR.

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DEDICATION

TO

MRS. MARY SAVAGE WOODWARD,

OF ROSE COTTAGE, WASHINGTON CITY.

"If there be one that o'er the dead
Hath in thy grief borne part,
Or watched through sickness by thy bed,
Call *hers* a kindred heart."

MY DEAREST MARY:

You have wept with me over my dead, and watched with me beside my sick; and for this cause, I beg to call you, near kin and dear friend, and to offer you—no rich gift indeed, but the best that I have to give—this work of my heart and brain and hand.

EMMA D. E. N. SOUTHWORTH.

PROSPECT COTTAGE, GEORGETOWN, D. C.

PREFACE.

I wish to say to my friends, that this tale is no mere fiction. The scenes in the Widow's Cottage are photographed from life. The history of the Widow's Son is that of one of our wealthiest merchants and most celebrated philanthropists.

EMMA D. E. N. SOUTHWORTH.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER I.

A MYSTERIOUS SUMMONS, ... 25

CHAPTER II.

THE PATIENT, ... 45

CHAPTER III.

LIFE'S NEW RECRUIT, ... 61

CHAPTER IV

THE DOCTOR'S FATE, ... 77

CHAPTER V

THE MESSENGER, ... 87

CHAPTER VI.

THE DAY'S REVELATIONS, ... 106

CHAPTER VII

THE WIDOW'S STAY, ... 121

CHAPTER VIII

INVESTIGATIONS, ... 134

CHAPTER IX

WAYS AND MEANS, ... 140

CHAPTER X

THE LITTLE HOUSEHOLD, ... 148

CHAPTER XI.

THE MOTHER AND SON, ... 159

CHAPTER XII.

KINDNESS AND COMFORT, ... 170

CHAPTER XIII.

BRIGHTER HOPES, ... 180

CHAPTER XIV

A SURPRISE, ... 189

CHAPTER XV

STRUGGLES, ... 200

CHAPTER XVI

VISITORS, ... 212

CHAPTER XVII.

SURPRISES, ... 221

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE OLD LODGE, ... 232

CHAPTER XIX

A NEW SCENE, ... 244

CHAPTER XX

OWEN'S PLAN, ... 256

CHAPTER XXI

IN THE OLD MANOR-HOUSE, ... 269

CHAPTER XXII.

OWEN BEGINS BUSINESS, ... 280

CHAPTER XXIII

THE LITTLE PEDLER, ... 291

CHAPTER XXIV

RISING, ... 299

CHAPTER XXV

RISING, ... 316

CHAPTER XXVI.

UPWARD, ... 324

CHAPTER XXVII.

PLEASANT DAYS, ... 330

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A BRIGHT DESCENT, ... 338

CHAPTER XXIX.

A SERENE SETTING, ... 354

CHAPTER XXX.

THE ORPHANS, ... 369

CHAPTER XXXI.

OWEN'S JOURNEY, ... 375

CHAPTER XXXII.

ANOTHER ENTERPRISE, ... 391

CHAPTER XXXIII.

AN IMPORTANT ARRIVAL, ... 402

CHAPTER XXXIV.

A CHANGE OF ABODE, ... 413

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE COTTAGE, ... 436

CHAPTER XXXVI.

"WE ARE LILIES," 444

CHAPTER XXXVII.

PERFECT LOVE, ... 451

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

LILY MAY'S WOE, ... 457

CHAPTER XXXIX.

LILY MAY'S WALK, ... 463

CHAPTER XL.

NAMELESS AND HOMELESS, ... 475

CHAPTER XLI.

SYMPATHY, ... 488

CHAPTER XLII.

MR. STUKELY AND HIS ONLY MOTHER, ... 499

CHAPTER XLIII.

A LUCKY VISITOR, ... 510

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE MUTE'S REVENGE, ... 515

CHAPTER XLV

REMORSE, ... 527

CHAPTER XLVI.

LILY MAY'S LETTER, ... 547

CHAPTER XLVII.

THE SEARCH, ... 561

CHAPTER XLVIII.

MOTHER AND DAUGHTER, ... 569

CHAPTER XLIX.

A STORY TOLD IN THE MIDDLE WATCH, ... 581

CHAPTER L.

DISCLOSURES, ... 592

CHAPTER LI.

ON THE OCEAN STEAMER, ... 606

CHAPTER LII.

NEAREST AND DEAREST, ... 617

CHAPTER LIII.

REUNION, ... 630

THE WIDOW'S SON.

CHAPTER I.

A MYSTERIOUS SUMMONS.

The strife of fiends is on the battling clouds,
The glare of hell is in these sulphurous lightnings—
This is no earthly storm! When I was young,
They still passed o'er like nature's fitful fevers,
That rendered all more wholesome. Now their rage,
Sent thus unseasonably and profitless,
Speaks like the threats of heaven.—*Maturin.*

It was a wild night! Never had a storm burst upon the earth with more fury than that which raged over the land and the sea upon that memorable fifteenth of July of the year in which this strange story opens. And nowhere was its devastating violence felt with more fatal effects than along the sea-coast and water-courses of the lower counties of Maryland and Virginia. The sky was as black as soot; the earth was drenched with rain; the rivers arose to flood-tides; the sea roared; the wind howled; and the thunder crashed and rolled as if at every peal a planet had exploded and hurled its fragments down the steeps of space! All was as dark as the Stygian Lake, except when a broad glare of blinding lightning illumined the whole awful scene as with the sulphurous fires of Tartarus.

In the little water-side village of Rogues' Harbor, as at better places, the streets and side-walks were all deserted. The inhabitants had retired into their houses as into forti-

fications, where, with closed shutters and drawn curtains, they tried to exclude the sight and sound of this terrific storm.

Even the "Doctor's Shop," an unpretending little house in the midst of the village, did not show its customary light; but seemed hermetically sealed in darkness and impenetrability against all intrusion of the storm, or the storm-beaten wayfarer. After the usual manner of country medical practice, this little establishment was made to unite the two-fold characters of doctor's office and druggist's shop. Upon this night the proprietor sat alone, in the little back parlor behind the shop. There was nothing but its exquisite neatness to make this little room attractive. The furniture was as plain as possible. Cheap straw matting covered the floor; white cotton curtains draped the window; six green wooden chairs were ranged along the walls; one round table, covered with a green cloth, stood in the centre of the room; one fine engraving from Leonardo di Venci's "Last Supper" hung over the mantelpiece; that was all.

In a green leather arm-chair, beside the centre table, sat the doctor, reading by a shaded lamp. Not altogether absorbed was he in his book. Sometimes he would lift his head and listen. But not to the raging storm without; *that* required no listening to be heard, for the wind, rain and thunder bombarded the little house as if they meant to batter it to the ground. Nor was it for any visitor's arrival that the doctor listened; for it was not to be supposed that any human creature gifted with reason would turn out for any purpose on earth in such a night as this. He listened for a sound from the room over his head, and hearing none, murmured to himself:

"She still sleeps," and resumed the perusal of his book.

While the doctor sits there reading; and while the storm howls around the house as if all the demons in Pandemonium were let loose; and before the interruption comes

which shall summon him amid the lightning and thunder, rain and wind, to go forth upon a mission destined fatally to affect his life and the lives of all that are dear to his heart—I will tell you who and what he is.

He was a fine-looking man as he sat there reading—tall, broad-shouldered, deep-chested and athletic, with strongly-marked, massive, but regular features, clear, roseate, sanguine complexion, full, light gray eyes, and thick, bright, flaxen hair clustering around a moderately broad and high forehead. The clear eyes were full of truth and candor, the curved lips redolent of sweetness and benevolence, the whole fine face expressive of goodness, intellect and strength. His dress was coarse enough, being of rough gray cloth, made up by a country tailor; but his linen was faultlessly clean and his hands white. Looking at him for the first time, the impression you would receive of him would be that he was a man of magnificent organization for health, strength, energy and long life. And you would be inclined to question whether such a man could ever be ill, or grow old, or die like other men? And you would think the insurance office might insure his life without pay, because they would certainly do it without risk. Your second impression of him would be that he was a thorough gentleman, that homespun cloth, made up by the village tailor, could never disguise.

Hugh Wynne, for so was the doctor called, was a Welshman by descent, as his name indicated. He was the youngest son of a poor Cheshire curate, who, after starving many years on thirty pounds per annum, had died, leaving a widow and large family to shift for themselves.

Hugh at the age of ten had been placed in a druggist shop at Chester, where he passed the early years of his youth in grinding, mixing and putting up physic, and in reading such medical books as fell in his way, and in attending to such simple maladies among the poor villagers as his limited experience enabled him to treat.

When he had reached the age of fifteen, without any prospect of ever being any thing better than a country druggist's assistant, he made up his mind to leave his depressed and over-crowded native place and seek a land where the field was broader and the dome of heaven higher, and where aspiration had room to breathe freely, spread its wings and rise.

He came to America; he landed in New York with but a few pounds in his pocket; and from that day he entered upon a new life, and upon a series of hopeful struggles that promised an ultimate success equal to his most sanguine expectations. The first thing he did was to answer an advertisement for a teacher; and he taught a country school one half the year to get money to pay his fees at a medical college for the other half. A young man so much in earnest must necessarily succeed. In due course of time he passed a triumphant examination and received his diploma.

Then commenced the second series of his struggles, more trying perhaps than the first. For now there was to be no division of the years between town and country; no half year spent in teaching the sturdy farmer boys and rosy, good-humored girls, amid the pure air and lavish abundance of rural life. Now he must depend entirely upon his profession and devote himself exclusively to it. Now he must live in the city in a cheap boarding-house in a poor neighborhood, because he could afford nothing better, until he should get into practice, and that is a long time in coming to a poor young doctor without friends, connections or influence. And he was very poor, and his practice lay principally among the destitute.

And just about this time he did what the world would have considered a very foolish thing—but what my readers may perhaps think a very noble one: he married a girl poorer, more friendless, and more destitute, than he himself had ever been.

And he did this at the very time that he might have made his fortune by marrying an heiress, and stepping at once into a fashionable practice. For poor as this young doctor was, his connection with the physicians and students of his college procured him admission into very good society, and his handsome person, courtly address, and brilliant conversational powers made him a general favorite in circles where girls with money were to be picked up. And in one of these he quite unintentionally won the affections of that heiress before mentioned.

It was after a party in which, as usual, he had met Miss Wendover, and she had been so unusually gracious as to half enlighten him upon the subject of her sentiments, that he was returning home in a very thoughtful mood of mind, when near his own door he was met by a messenger—a little lad—who accosted him with—

"Be your honor Doctor Wynne?"

"Yes, my boy. What is it?"

"Mammy says if you don't come right away to Amy she will die!"

The young doctor did not stop to ask who "mammy" was; or what might be the matter with "Amy;" but simply telling the boy to lead the way, he followed him through quite a labyrinth of by-streets, lanes and alleys, until they reached a tall, dilapidated tenement house, which they entered. The boy led the way up three flights of stairs to the third story of the house, and paused before the door of a little room at the end of the passage, and knocked.

The door was opened by an old woman, who admitted them into a small chamber, very poor but very clean. On the narrow white bed that, small as it was, filled up nearly half the room, lay the form of a young girl of about eigh teen years of age. On a little stand beside the bed, covered with a coarse white towel, stood a tallow candle in a white crockery candlestick, and a pitcher of water, and a tumbler.

The doctor took up the candle, and held it over the bed to look at his patient.

She was a delicate girl, with a sweet face, whose beauty even illness and poverty could not mar, for it was a beauty that emanated from the soul. Her face was very thin and wan, with hollow eyes and wasted cheeks; but her forehead was broad and fair; her nose small and straight; her lips finely curved; her hair and eyebrows and eyelashes of a dark chestnut color; and those hollow eyes were large and bright with fever, and those wasted cheeks were crimson with the hectic flush.

The doctor replaced the candle, and beckoned the old woman out into the passage. He understood the case at once. There was no need for him to ask many questions; though from the few he did ask he learned that the girl was Amy Hart, an orphan, and a seamstress; and he knew that close confinement to her needle-work, insufficient food and clothing, and an ill-ventilated dwelling were the causes of her illness. She had no friend nearer than this old woman, who was her fellow-lodger, and who made a miserable living by taking in washing.

The doctor returned to his patient, wrote a prescription, and directed it to a druggist in the neighborhood who was authorized by the trustees of the poor to supply medicine to the needy at the city's expense. This missive was intrusted to the little lad Johnny, who immediately took it to its destination.

The doctor spoke a few encouraging words to the sick girl, whose gentle brown eyes were raised in gratitude to his face, while her mild voice thanked him for his attention; and then he left the room. The old woman went to the door to let him out. As he parted with her he slipped a piece of money in her hand, telling her to get the nourishing food that he had ordered for his patient.

And then he returned home, haunted with the sweet face and gentle voice of that patient young sufferer, and lament-

ing, as he never lamented before, his own poverty, that limited his power to help her. I have already said that he was a man of magnificent organization; the very ideal of masculine health, strength and energy; and upon that very account, perhaps, he felt the more tender sympathy for the poor fragile girl, left to fight the battle of life alone, and sinking exhausted on its field.

"If *I* find the struggle for life so hard, what must she find it?" was the mental question that wounded his heart.

From that time the young doctor visited his patient daily. She was suffering under an attack of hectic fever, brought on by excessive toil, privation and exposure. But the young doctor had enough of both skill and leisure to devote to her service, and he gave them willingly. And every day he was more charmed by her beauty, sweetness and intelligence. And every day she improved under his care.

Poor girl! she had been famished in every way: her stomach for food, her heart for sympathy, and her mind for knowledge.

Doctor Wynne brought her all the necessaries of life. He took the gold chain from his watch, and sold the useless bauble, and put the price in the old woman's hands, that Amy might have broth and wine and jelly in plenty.

And like the young bird that opens its mouth in unquestioning faith to receive the morsel that is brought it, so Amy, without any feeling of revolted pride, or any sense of humiliation, received all these offerings from her kind physician, repaying him with a gentle, grateful smile, and more than repaying him by her innocent enjoyment of his gifts. Poor Amy never suspected the sacrifices he was making to purchase her comforts. He was a doctor, he was well dressed, and carried a gold watch! How should she imagine that he could be poor? And so Amy took his jellies as she took his tonics, and smiled at him in her innocent unconsciousness.

And not food alone did the young doctor bring to his hungry patient, but that for which she was starving quite as much—sympathy: nay, let us call it by its right name—love! And when she grew a little better he lent her books from his own slender stock. And so in two months Amy got well—that is to say comparatively well.

But Doctor Wynne did not deceive himself; he knew that her recovery was but a deceptive one, unless—unless what? Why, that she could be rescued from the slow suicide of a needle-woman's life! What should he do about it? If he had been in the receipt of even so much as six hundred dollars a year, he would not have hesitated a moment. He would have married her out of hand. But his income was not three hundred a year.

Even as it was, he did not hesitate very long. He dropped in to inquire after his young patient one day, and when he saw her bending patiently over her needle-work, and noticed the crimson hectic spot that had reappeared on her cheek, he fell into deep thought, communing with himself.

He felt that if he should take this fragile young creature to his bosom, and shelter her from the storms of life; and cherish her with tenderness; and nourish her from his own superabundant vitality, that she would bloom into full health; and he knew that if he did not do this she would fade into death. Unless he rescued her from the life she led, she must perish! And he said to himself that it would be mean, selfish, and cowardly in him to hesitate any longer.

And so he took the leap in the dark. And while the great Madison-Square heiress, Miss Wendover, was waiting to endow him with her hand and fortune, and introduce him to a fashionable practice among her dear five hundred friends, and while he knew this, he deliberately asked poor Amy Hart, the seamstress, to become his wife.

Amy was too happy not to accept him, and too innocent

not to betray her happiness; and so they were soon married. And Doctor Wynne took his sweet young wife home to his boarding-house, and had ten dollars a week to pay instead of five, to say nothing of prospective expenses. And Amy was as happy as the day was long; for to her the change was like coming out of purgatory into paradise. The deliverance from hard work was like liberation from penal servitude. Her leisure seemed like the state of a queen. The common-place boarding-house seemed a palace; and its ordinary meals appeared sumptuous feasts. But her joy of joys was in the tender, cherishing love of her husband, whom, with all her heart and soul, she loved and worshipped. She had every thing that she wanted, and she never suspected what a burden she was to him, and what a drawback she was destined to become.

And he would have endured much rather than that she should have known this. For he loved her truly, and never once had he regretted the step he had taken—never once, even when it led him into misfortunes.

First, Miss Wendover heard of his marriage, and ferreted out all the circumstances attending it; and when she discovered that she had been sacrificed to a poor seamstress, or as she termed her, a low seamstress, with the jealous rage of a mortified woman, she turned all her social influence against him, representing his marriage not only as a "low," but as a degrading one. And so it followed that he was invited to no more parties. That, however, was important only in its significance—otherwise it was of no account; for he would not have accepted any invitation in which Amy was not included, nor attended any party without her; and it was quite impossible that she could go, for all the doctor's means would not have availed to purchase her one passable evening dress.

But even his college friends turned a cold shoulder to him. The old professors who had once been his friends gravely shook their heads; and the young students, his

late companions, scornfully shrugged their shoulders. And all agreed that Wynne had done a very foolish, not to say disgraceful, thing.

But, notwithstanding he was cut by the "upper ten-thousand," the noble young doctor did manage to struggle into a small practice, principally confined to the neighborhood in which he lived. The way in which it happened was this: The poor that he attended gratuitously, and treated with his very best skill, would speak of his wonderful cures to their more fortunate neighbors. The laundress carrying home laces and muslins to the nervous, fine lady who employed her, would tell how completely the young doctor had cured her of that "nasty nervous headache" that nobody else could do any thing for. And the young doctor would get the fine lady for a patient.

Then the pastor of the parish, visiting among the poor of his congregation, would hear of Doctor Wynne and his great skill, and recommend him, as an "experiment," to the valetudinarians and hypochondriacs of his acquaintance; and the young doctor would get more patients. And thus, in time, he attained a small, but living and growing practice.

He took a neat house in the neighborhood, and furnished it plainly; and engaged one servant. Here the young doctor and his pretty wife lived very comfortably. Amy had every wish of her heart satisfied; but then her wishes were very moderate And her circumstances, compared with what they had been, seemed affluent.

In due course of time a son was born to the young parents—a fine, robust, blooming boy, with all his father's health, strength and energy.

Ah! after his birth his mother's health sunk again. The seeds of consumption were, perhaps, too deeply planted in her system ever to be eradicated. All that the husband's tenderest care, and the doctor's greatest skill could do was to modify and palliate the disease that could never be

wholly cured And though in successive years other children were born to them, they (the children) were fragile little creatures that survived their birth but a few days. I am afraid, after all, that the doctor's good heart had led him into a great mistake when he married this delicate girl.

At length, when little Owen was about eight years of age, the doctor began to understand that there was no hope for his wife but in a removal to a warmer climate. And he began to write to his medical friends in the South to inquire for any opening there for a young physician. He wished to take his wife south before the coming of another winter.

At last he received a satisfactory letter from an old college friend, telling him that there was an excellent opening for a general medical practitioner in the little village of "Rogues' Harbor," on the Chesapeake. And that, though the village was nothing to speak of in itself; and though it had a rather obnoxious name—derived from its old colonial history, when it was a depot for the hidden merchandise of smugglers,—still it was the centre of a very wealthy neighborhood, where the great tobacco planters fared sumptuously every day, and were, in consequence, delightfully bilious. The climate, too, was warm and genial in winter, and cool and invigorating in summer as compared to others. In other words, the weather there, all the year round, was more equable than elsewhere. The old physician of the locality had died; and the bilious planters were growing as yellow as their own golden harvest-fields, and killing themselves off with surfeits of soft crabs and other river-reptiles, with no one to save them. If he—Doctor Wynne—should come to this remote village, the writer continued, he must bring his own physic along with him, and unite the duties of an apothecary with those of a medical practitioner.

Doctor Wynne reflected. If he should decide to go to "Rogues' Harbor"—delightful name!—he must resign all

those hopes of future distinction which his talents justified him in entertaining. He might win wealth, but he never could win a professorship at "Rogues' Harbor." It would be a great sacrifice of his professional prospects to go there. But as, in the first instance, he had not hesitated to resign wealth and fashion to rescue the woman he loved from labor and privation, so now he did not hesitate to resign prospective honors to preserve her health. He resolved to take his wife to this equable climate; to these sunny skies; to this land flowing with milk and honey; to this healthy neighborhood, where the people never grew sick except of a surfeit of good things. He gave up his practice in the city, sold out his simple furniture at a sacrifice, realized but a few hundred dollars, laid in a stock of drugs and fixtures for a village apothecary's shop, and started with his wife and child for "Rogues' Harbor."

It took so much money to fit up and stock his shop that but little was left to furnish his house and keep his family until the fees from his practice should begin to come in. His house was, therefore, furnished as plainly as I have described it to be. And when he was at home, as upon this evening, he wore a home-spun suit, bought of the village tailor. But his plain house and plain furniture were of but little consequence, as the manners and customs of the people of this remote district were very simple, not to say rough. The wealthiest planters who claimed descent from the oldest families were content to live in moderate-sized farm-houses unpretendingly furnished; and satisfied to wear, when at home, the domestic cloth, spun and woven by their own negroes from the wool that grew on the backs of their own sheep. And they were rather proud of their rough independence in thus living and thus dressing. And what vanity and extravagance they ever displayed were only exhibited in their sumptuous feasts wasted upon friends and neighbors, and finery lavished upon their women.

There were some exceptions to this rustic style of living.

A few wealthy and enterprising new-comers, drawn to the neighborhood by its advantages of climate and soil, and game and fish, and who loved the refinements and elegancies of life, had erected imposing mansions and furnished them splendidly. But these new-comers did not find favor with the old inhabitants, who prided themselves upon their ancient families and long possession of the lands.

Doctor Wynne had now been two months in the village of "Rogues' Harbor," and had already got into a little practice. His wife's health already showed hopeful signs of improvement, and he did not regret his old city home. He watched over her with all a husband's love and all a physician's care. Whatever his own irregularities of food, rest and exercise might be, he enjoined regularity upon her.

If he sat up late at night to read up a difficult case, he saw that she retired to rest.

Thus it happened upon this night of the great storm, that is remembered to this very day along that coast, the doctor sat up reading alone while his wife and child slept. If he listened in the pauses of the storm it was to hear whether it had awakened them. But all continued silent in the room above, while the "strife of fiends" and the crash of worlds seemed to be going on without.

"The storm must subside with the turning of the night," said Doctor Wynne, glancing up at the little wooden clock upon the mantel-piece, and seeing that the minute hand was upon the stroke of twelve.

He was about half right, for, as the clock struck the hour, the din without ceased; the thunder rumbled away out of hearing into the immensity of space; the wind sighed itself into silence; and the rain wept softly.

"Midnight! I have sat up too long," said the doctor, closing his book.

At that moment the shop-bell rang.

The doctor arose in some surprise.

It was an unusual, an unprecedented thing for a call to

be made at that hour. If the villagers were ever taken ill at all in the night they worried through with such remedies as were at hand until the morning, rather than turn out at uncanny hours. Therefore the doctor was surprised at a circumstance that never would have surprised him in his old home.

He hurried into the shop and opened the front door.

A very black negro man stood there.

"Well, what do you want, my good fellow?" inquired the doctor.

The negro did not answer, but began to fumble awkwardly in all his pockets one after the other.

"Man, alive! if you can't speak, come in out of the rain," said the doctor, stretching wide the door.

The negro came into the shop, and stood still fumbling among his pockets, while the doctor closed the door upon the storm that had changed its mind and come back again.

"What do you want with me? Who sent you? Can't you speak?" inquired the doctor, impatiently, seeing that the negro continued silent. The latter looked up helplessly into the speaker's face, and pointed into his own mouth and shook his head.

"Humph! deaf and dumb, I suppose, and only knew that I was talking to him by watching the motion of my lips. What shall I do with the poor fellow?" said the doctor to himself.

But at that moment the "poor fellow" had brought his fumbling search to a successful termination, and produced from one of his pockets a letter, which he handed the doctor.

Doctor Wynne opened it. It had neither address, date, nor signature, and it was written in a hand that was evidently disguised. It was as follows:

"I have sent a close carriage for you. Come immediately if you would save a fellow-creature from death and worse than death.

You shall be well paid. The messenger is deaf and dumb; but he will drive you safely."

The doctor looked in perplexity from the unsatisfactory letter to the blank face of the negro.

"Come? Come where? how far? to whom? for what?" The short letter did not tell him, and the dumb negro could not. So it was no use to question him.

"Sit down and rest yourself," said the doctor, pointing to a chair.

The deaf messenger understood the gesture, if he could not hear the words, that proffered him this privilege. And he immediately availed himself of it.

The doctor went up stairs into his wife's chamber.

It was a pretty room, with a white bed, white window curtains, white toilet table and white resting-chair.

"Are you awake, Amy?" he inquired, softly approaching the bed.

"Yes, dear; I have been lying awake all the evening listening to the storm."

"Were you frightened, Amy?" he asked, tenderly stooping over her.

"Oh, no; I loved to lie here and listen to the rain and wind and thunder. They seem to speak with awful, beautiful voices."

"I am called out, Amy. Shall you be afraid to stay here alone?" he asked.

"Called out! What, in this storm, at this time of night?" she exclaimed, ignoring his question about herself, and thinking only of him.

"Yes, love; but they have sent a close carriage for me."

"Who? How far is it you are to go?"

"I—really do not exactly know, Amy. I am summoned by a few lines without signature, brought to me by a deaf and dumb negro, who is to drive me to my destination."

"How very queer! Hugh, I hope you won't go."

"My dear, I must. Nor do I see any thing so very queer in the affair either. The writer of that note was evidently frightened and hurried, and therefore forgot to sign it. But you have not answered my question, Amy! Shall you be afraid to remain here alone, while I am gone?"

"Oh no; I shall have Owen with me for company."

"Shall I wake up Nancy, and tell her to bring her mattress in here and remain with you until I return?"

"Oh no! indeed I shall not be afraid on my own account. There is nothing to hurt me; but I hate to have you go away when I don't know where you are going," said Amy, fretfully.

The doctor laughed.

"I am big enough and old enough to take care of myself, Amy," he said.

Then she laughed as she replied:

"I know you are, and I am very foolish. Go then, dear. I only hope 'they,' whoever they are, will not keep you out all night."

And she held up her pretty lips for the good-night kiss.

Her husband stooped and gave it to her several times over.

Then he left the room, put on his water-proof overcoat and shoes, took his hat, and beckoning the negro to follow him, left the shop.

It was as dark and as wet as the river of Styx, and the storm was still raging, though not with its former fury. The carriage was drawn up before the shop, and the horses were standing still and dripping under the pouring rain.

The doctor carefully closed the shop-door, took the night-key with him, and entered the carriage.

The dumb coachman mounted the box and started the horses.

And thus, through lightning and thunder and pouring rain, Hugh Wynne went all unconsciously to meet his fate!

CHAPTER II.

THE PATIENT.

'Tis night; within a curtained room
Filled to faintness with perfume
A lady lies at point of doom.

'Tis dawn: a child hath seen the light.
But for the lady fair and bright,
She slumbers in eternal night.—*Anonymous.*

THROUGH driving wind and lashing rain, and blinding lightning and deafening thunder, the horses slowly forced their passage along that black road.

Doctor Wynne sat back in the carriage, meditating on the strange summons that had called him forth in the dead of night, through a furious storm, to an unknown destination.

He wished to inquire how far he was to go, to what house, who was his patient, and what was the matter? But clearly, it would be of no use to ask questions of the deaf mute who drove him, and who seemed to be as stupid as he was deaf and dumb, and who could scarcely be expected to understand the questions even if he could hear them.

All that the doctor could do was to sit back patiently and wait the issue.

How the rain lashed the carriage! How the thunder shook it! The horses could scarcely make any progress. Sometimes they were brought to a stand-still. Sometimes they were nearly thrown over. The night continued black as Erebus. The storm increased in fury. The lightning glared as though it would set the universe on fire; the thunder rolled and crashed like the explosion and fall of planets.

The horrible journey seemed never to come to an end.

The doctor thought he had been some hours on the road, when he took out his watch and held it open until a flash of lightning showed him the time—it was but a little after one o'clock. The same flash revealed through the side window of the carriage that he was in a thick wood. And the next instant all was black darkness and howling chaos again.

The doctor put up his watch, sat back in his seat and renewed his vows of patience. But they were scarcely called for; almost immediately the carriage stopped; the deaf mute got off the box and opened the door.

Another blaze of lightning assured the doctor that he was still in the thick woods—woods so thick that it was surprising how the carriage had made its way through them. There was no sign of a human habitation near.

The doctor alighted amid the pouring rain and dripping foliage and followed his mute conductor into a narrow foot-path, where the thickly-interlaced branches overhead prevented the necessity of hoisting his umbrella, even had it been possible to do so there.

The doctor was a strong, brave man, by birth a hardy Welsh mountaineer; he had been out in many a night-storm among the crags and cataracts of his native country; but never had he been exposed to a storm so horrible as this, and never under circumstances so trying.

At every glare of lightning, each leaf of the multitudinous woods seemed tipped with flame, while all the firmament appeared on fire. And then, in an instant, the awful conflagration would be swallowed up in total darkness and deafening noise; the horrors of vision would give place to the horrors of sound; and at every peal of thunder, fall of rain, and blast of wind, the trees of the forest would crouch and shriek and howl like tormented spirits in purgatory.

Twenty minutes, that seemed as many hours of this diabolical night-walk, brought the doctor and his conductor to a narrow gate in a stone fence, near which the woods

grew so close as to conceal it entirely from view until the spectator was actually against it.

The conductor unlocked this gate and drew the doctor through it. A flash of lightning discovered that they were now in a thickly-planted shrubbery, from the midst of which arose the tall chimneys of a lofty mansion. Soon they passed through this shrubbery and reached the house—a huge, gloomy building of many doors and windows; but not one ray of light to indicate that any human being lived within its dreary halls and chambers.

They went up the drenched stone steps to the ponderous oaken door, where the conductor, avoiding the heavy iron knocker, rapped softly with his knuckles.

The door was opened. Still total darkness! But from the darkness a hand was gropingly thrust out, the doctor was silently taken by the arm and drawn in.

The next instant the door was closed and locked, the dumb conductor was left out in the storm and the astonished doctor was shut up in the darkness with his unseen and unknown companion.

"Where am I?" was his first, natural inquiry.

"Hush; or speak low; and do not be alarmed; you are in safety."

It was a woman's voice that spoke, a woman's garments that swept on by his side, and a woman's hand that clasped his arm and drew him onward through the darkness.

"Why am I brought here?" he next inquired.

"To perform a professional duty, for which you shall be well paid," was the answer.

"But why this mystery? this dark reception? this excessive secrecy?"

"Are you a physician? and do you ask such questions as these? Neither your practice of medicine nor your knowledge of the world can have been very extensive!"

The doctor was silenced; but though his lips were idle, his thoughts were busy. This strange woman leading

him through the dark halls and passages of this unknown house was a lady, for her words and tones were those of refined society. And she was a stranger; for the dress that swept on beside him was of silk, and the worthy women of this neighborhood never wore such expensive fabrics except on Sundays, high-days and holidays.

She drew him along up broad stairs, carpeted with some material so thick that it yielded not the slightest echo to their footsteps. At length, on the second landing, a little ray of light, like the smallest star, gleamed upon them. It came from a key-hole in a door at the end of the passage.

"Ah! that must be stopped!" muttered the lady to herself as soon as she saw this light.

She drew him towards it and opened the door; drew him into the room, and then shut the door and hung a pocket-handkerchief over the key, to prevent the light in the room from shining through it.

While she was adjusting this, the doctor took a survey of the scene in which he so unexpectedly found himself.

It was a dimly-lighted, sumptuous chamber, whose gloomy splendor surprised and impressed him. He had left such things behind him in New York, and never expected to find them in St. Mary's, where even the wealthiest of the native families furnished their houses with almost Spartan simplicity. This, then, was another proof that the strange inhabitants of this unknown house were new-comers to the country.

Although this chamber was so dimly lighted by the little taper that stood upon the marble mantel-piece, yet to one coming, as Doctor Wynne did, from total darkness into this half light, every thing was sufficiently distinct. The floor was covered with a thick, soft, rich Turkey carpet, into whose deep wool the foot sank silently among the brightest flowers that the looms of the East could produce in imitation of its parterres. The golden hue predominated in the flowers of the carpet and in the draperies of the

room. The two lofty front windows were shaded with long, golden-hued damask curtains, that fell in rich and lustrous folds from ceiling to floor. Between these windows stood an elegant dressing-table, draped with fine lace over gold-colored silk, adorned with all the delicate paraphernalia of a young lady's toilet, and surmounted by a splendid mirror, also veiled with fine lace and trimmed with gold-colored ribbon. On the right hand of these windows, with its foot to the fire-place, stood the bed, entirely concealed by the golden-hued damask curtains that were drawn closely around it. The sofas, the chairs, and the foot-stools were all covered with golden-hued damask to match the curtains. Inlaid tables and stands stood here and there, as convenience decided. Altogether, the aspect of the room expressed wealth, taste, and luxurious habits in the owner.

Doctor Wynne took all this in at a glance, while the lady was busy stopping up the key-hole. When she turned towards him, his regards were fixed upon *her*.

She was a tall, finely-formed, very majestic-looking woman, of about forty years of age. She was attired in a dressing-gown of black silk, that seemed to have been hastily thrown on over a richly-embroidered white skirt. At a superficial glance she appeared handsome, prepossessing, and even fascinating; but on nearer view, she was not so. Her stately head, covered with an abundant suit of hair, as black and as glistening as jet, and wound in a large mass at the back of her neck, really seemed to need no other covering; and the delicate lace cap that half-shaded, half-revealed the fine head of hair, seemed worn more for appearance than from necessity. Her eyebrows and eyelashes were as black as her hair, and her features were perfectly regular; and, as I said before, at a superficial glance they were fascinating, especially when she smiled. But on nearer view, these same features, with all their beauty, were repelling; for though they were so perfectly regular, you would then see that the large, dark eyes

were not dark hazel, brown, or blue, but dark *green;* and that the straight nose was a little *sharp*, the classic lips *thin*, and the finely-curved chin *pointed*. Upon the whole, she owned a handsome face, that one would nevertheless distrust and avoid, even in despite of the charming smile that sometimes lighted it up.

All this, also, the doctor observed in the short time that she was coming towards him.

"Is my patient here?" inquired Doctor Wynne, of this handsome, repelling woman.

"She is there," was the reply, as the woman walked towards the bed, drew the curtains back, and looked within them. All was still there; as still as the bed of death when the soul of the dead had departed.

"She is asleep! She is enjoying an interval of ease. That is well, for I have something to say to you before she awakes," said the lady, coming towards the doctor and beckoning to take a seat beside her on the distant sofa.

The doctor complied. And when they were seated side by side, she began to speak to him, while he listened and observed and drew his own inferences. She spoke of that which would have called all the blood in a woman's heart in fiery blushes to her cheeks, to have sent it all back the next instant, leaving those cheeks white forevermore! Yet *her* cheek changed not from its clear, cool, brown tint. She spoke of that which would have caused another woman's voice to tremble, falter, and die out! Yet her cold, hard tone never once varied in its steadiness.

All this the doctor noticed, and, as I said, he formed his own opinions.

"I have heard, sir, that doctors are bound by their professional oaths never to reveal the secrets of women?" she said.

Doctor Wynne bowed in silent assent.

"Under all circumstances?" inquired the lady, coldly.

"Under all circumstances, except in cases that come

under the cognizance of the criminal courts," replied the doctor, gravely.

"It is the secret of a woman that I am forced to confide to you to-night. I say 'forced,' for, believe me, if I could have managed the case alone I would not have called upon you, or upon any other human being! As it is, I have confided in no one but yourself. The deaf and dumb negro, who carried you the note that brought you hither, knows nothing of the errand upon which you have come. No human being in this house knows of your presence here except myself. No human being in this house suspects the necessity that has caused you to be sent for, except myself. The secret, then, will be confided to you alone; and to you, only because your assistance may be necessary to save an invaluable life."

The doctor bowed gravely and looked up at the speaker. And, as he looked at her, he thought, in truth, those classic, cruel lips would not have faltered in pronouncing the doom, nor those handsome, ruthless eyes in beholding the death of any one whose life might be useless or troublesome to herself.

"Your patient is the young person in yonder bed. I do not say young lady, because, in fact, she has forfeited her position as such. I do not tell you her name, because she has lost all claim to bear it longer. Nor will I reveal her family, because she has brought deep dishonor upon them all. It would be as idle as it is needless to inquire who or what she is!"

"Madam, it is enough for me to know that the young lady is a sufferer, in need of my professional services. I shall ask no unnecessary questions, but do the best I can for her. Is she asleep?" said the doctor, rising.

"Yes. I was obliged to administer a powerful opiate while waiting for your arrival. She is still under its influence."

A movement and a moan from the bed attracted their attention. A plaintive voice murmured, as in half sleep:

"Oh, must I die! must I die, here alone, with none to pity, or to help! Oh, love! husband! where are you! where!"

The lady and the doctor both approached the bed.

The lady drew aside the curtains and stooped over the sufferer.

"How do you feel?" she inquired.

But the young lady murmured some inarticulate words in reply, and sank again into a heavy sleep.

"I hope I have done her no injury by administering that opiate?" said the lady, interrogatively.

"I cannot give an opinion, madam, until I shall have examined the condition of my patient," said the doctor, walking up.

The lady gave place, and the doctor advanced to the side of the bed and looked upon the sleeper.

A face of chiselled marble and of perfect beauty. Coal black hair, eyebrows and eyelashes. And the stillness of death over all.

The doctor glanced over his shoulder. The lady was busy at a table near the other end of the room. The doctor looked at his patient again—took up her hand and felt her pulse. Now whether it was his touch that disturbed her, or some sudden palsy that convulsed her, is not known; but she shuddered through all her frame—a spasm passed over her white face; her features twitched; her large dark eyes flew open, flared wildly around, and then settled, half in terror, half in appeal, upon the face of the doctor.

"Do not be frightened, young lady. I am your medical attendant. I am here to aid you," said the doctor, kindly; for his heart warmed to the poor young creature. She looked up in his face with an eager, inquiring, searching gaze; and finding nothing there to repel her confidence, she said.

"You look so good and wise and brave! You will not turn against me, will you? Oh, please do not! I have no friend in the world!"

"Indeed I will not," said the doctor.

"And do not think evil of me! I am married; indeed I am. I have been married nearly a year! See! here is my wedding-ring! I wore it on a ribbon around my neck, until to-night; but to-night I was determined to put it on my finger! See! there it is!" she said, holding up her little white hand to the doctor's view.

"I do not doubt you, my dear. Your face is innocence itself. Do not agitate yourself unnecessarily," said the doctor, gently taking her hand.

"Oh! thank you—thank you for believing in me. But here! I want you to look at my ring."

The doctor complied with her request.

"Now put it on my finger again. I wanted you to know it; so that if I should die in the coming trial—"

"Hush, my child! You will not die, and you must not think so," interposed the doctor, as he replaced the golden circlet on her finger.

Before she could speak again a spasm of pain seized her, and held her so long in its terrible grasp that it seemed her strength must succumb.

"Madam, I must have the assistance of a woman here," said the doctor, firmly.

"I am a woman; and I am here, ready to render all the assistance you may require," replied the lady, coldly.

"You, madam!"

"I!"

The doctor said no more at the time, for his patient required all his attention. The lady busied herself with a nurse's preparation about the room.

An hour passed on—an hour of almost mortal agony to the patient and of intense anxiety to the doctor. And then he came to the lady, and whispered:

"It is impossible to save the life of both mother and child; one or the other must be sacrificed."

"Then save the mother—sacrifice the child!" said the

lady, as the gleam of a horrible joy shot from her dark green eyes.

The doctor went back to his patient.

Another hour passed on; and again the doctor sought the lady's side.

"The mother is saved," he said.

"And the child?" she inquired.

"Is also saved. It is one of nature's miracles! Art could not have achieved it."

The lady's face changed. The hideous joy that had lighted it up as with the fires of hell died out, leaving it pale, and cold, and hard, and full of disappointment, defiance and cruelty.

The doctor was watching her closely.

"Since you have condescended to take upon yourself the offices of a nurse, madam, will you please to give me your attention for a little time?" he said.

"Very well," she answered, coldly.

The doctor gave her such instructions as he would have given to a nurse, and then he went to look at his patient.

As soon as he approached the bed she caught his hand, and gazing wildly in his face, exclaimed:

"Oh! doctor—save my child! save my child!"

"From what, my dear young lady?"

"From *her!* from *her!* Save my child from a cruel death at her hands. And save *her* from a deadly sin."

"I will—I will, my dear. But who is this lady whom you fear so much?"

"She is—— Oh! I dare not tell you," she whispered, as if frightened at the question.

Before another word could be spoken the lady joined them, and all confidential talk was at an end.

The doctor noted the lady. He did not like her looks at all. They filled him with suspicion. He distrusted and dreaded them. He thought the terrors of the young mother not unfounded.

A little later, when the child was dressed and laid by its mother's side, the lady came to the doctor.

"I have some experience in young children, and I think that child does not seem likely to live, after all," she said.

"Madam, that child is as fine, sound and healthy a little girl as I ever had the pleasure of introducing into the world during the whole course of my professional practice," replied the doctor, pointedly.

"I do not believe it; and I know something of babes," said the lady, grimly.

"So do I," replied the doctor.

"We shall see," said the lady.

The doctor looked up into those cold, cruel, dark greenish eyes, and at that fine pointed nose, and those firmly set, thin lips; and he shared the terrible suspicions of the young mother. He laid his hand impressively upon the lady's wrist, drew her away to a distant window, and said:

"Madam, when in answer to your question to-night, I told you that my professional oath bound me to keep the secrets of families, I also warned you that it would not cover criminal cases."

"What do you mean by that, sir?" she inquired haughtily, but without meeting his searching eye.

"I mean, madam, that when called upon to give evidence in a court of justice, a doctor may, nay he *must*, even reveal the secrets of families, if they happen to bear upon the case," said the doctor, firmly.

The lady's face suddenly blanched.

"What is it that you permit yourself to insinuate, sir?" she icily inquired.

"I insinuate nothing. I declare in plain terms that I shall require to see that child every day," said Doctor Wynne.

"For what purpose, sir—since you affirm that it is quite healthy?"

"To assure myself of its continuing so."

"Do you mean to insinuate that the babe is in danger?" sneered the lady, still avoiding to meet the honest clear blue eyes of the Welsh doctor.

"Madam, as I said before, I mean to insinuate nothing. I am not an insinuating man. I mean to say, plainly, that I fear the babe *is* in danger."

"Sir!"

"Madam?"

Their eyes met now in mutual defiance; but with a difference, for the lady's defiance was fierce, the doctor's firm.

"You say that you shall require to see this child every day. Suppose that I should disclaim your right to do so? Suppose that I should refuse you the sight of the child?" she asked.

"My fears for its safety would be confirmed. And I should consider myself bound to take measures to prevent the commission of a crime, or to punish it if already committed," he replied.

"And how would you do this?"

"I would go into court with a statement of all that I know and all that I suspect of this matter, and sue out a writ of habeas corpus requiring you to produce the child."

The lady laughed scornfully.

"But how could you do this? You know neither the house you have entered nor the people you have served," she sneered.

"It would not be impossible, or even difficult, to discover and identify both."

"Perhaps so; that depends on circumstances; but supposing that you could do so, upon what possible ground could you sue out a writ of habeas corpus against me?"

"Upon the ground of what I know and what I suspect."

"And what is that?"

"I know that the birth of this child is a concealed one. I know that while for some reason or other, which resem-

bles self-interest more than affection, the life of the mother is precious to you, that of the child is hateful. Madam, when I hinted that the life of the child must be sacrificed to the safety of the mother, I saw the ill-concealed satisfaction in your face. And subsequently, when by a miracle of nature I was happily enabled to save *both*, I saw the bitter disappointment in your countenance. Madam, I am a natural physiognomist. I read your thoughts and I feared for the child. That is the reason why I shall require to see the child every day: or, if not permitted to do so, compel you to bring it into court. Madam, it is no more pleasant for me to speak these words than for you to hear them; but I am forced to do so, since I cannot become the accomplice of a crime. I must save you from a deadly sin and the child from an unnatural death," said the doctor, firmly.

She turned away her head. Oh! if Hugh Wynne could have seen the fell hatred that darkened her face in that instant! It was gone when she turned again towards him with a look of appeal.

"Good Heaven, what shall I do? Doctor, you have bitterly wronged me by your suspicions; but there are times when women lose their senses, I think. And such a time has come to me, and it inspires you with these fears. They are groundless; but listen!—there are but three persons in the world who know of the existence of this wretched babe. And these three, doctor, are you, myself and that unhappy girl. Neither of us are likely to reveal the secret. You are bound by your professional oath; we by regard for our family honor But if we keep this miserable babe on the premises we cannot guard the secret of its birth from the knowledge of the servants. By to-morrow it would be known throughout the house; by the day after, throughout the neighborhood. Oh, doctor, if you have a drop of humanity, do not accuse a distracted woman, but help her."

Now, Doctor Wynne was not for a moment deceived by this show of candor and trust. He knew that he had to deal with a guileful devil. Nevertheless he did not meet guile with guile, but spoke out plainly as was his custom.

"But, madam, why should the honor of the family be concerned in the concealment of the birth of this child when the young lady is a wife?"

"A wife?—poor wretch, so *she* says. She might say, with more truth, that she is a fool. She was the dupe of a designing villain who deserted her; and this is the end."

Moans from the bed attracted the attention of the speakers. They were standing at some distance and they had spoken in a low tone; but the senses of the sick are sometimes preternaturally acute, and she might have heard them; for her moans seemed to express mental rather than physical distress.

The doctor went towards his patient. The lady followed him, for she seemed determined to permit no one word of confidential conversation between the two.

"What is it, my child? Are you in pain?" inquired the doctor, bending over the sufferer.

"Yes. No. I don't know. It is about my babe."

"What about it?"

"Oh, doctor, take her with you! I cannot guard her always, you know! I might drop asleep, and then!"

She suddenly paused and shuddered.

"Yes; you have inoculated her with your absurd fears," said the lady.

"Oh, doctor—dear, good doctor—take her away with you, and put her out to nurse with some good woman. You shall be well paid and so shall the woman. But oh, never, never shall I cease to be grateful. Oh, doctor, will you? will you?"

"My dear, do not excite yourself so much. No harm shall come to your child."

"But oh, doctor, take her out of harm's way. Take her!

take her! It will not be for long! My husband will come back! he will! he is good and true and noble as—as you are, doctor! and he will come back and claim his wife and child, and all will be well!"

"Girl! stop this raving nonsense, I say!" exclaimed the lady.

"It is not raving. It is truth."

"Absurdity! You have no husband."

"I have! I have! He will come back to confute all these calumnies!" she exclaimed, in great excitement.

"Madam, I must request that you will not agitate my patient," said the doctor.

"I cannot permit her insane assertions to pass uncontradicted," said the lady, firmly.

"Why not? What harm can they do?" inquired Doctor Wynne.

"Oh, sir, they are not insane; they are true. Oh doctor! take my child away! Take her away, and take care of her only for a little while, until my husband comes back! Then he will thank and repay you. Then he will take back his wife and child; for we are his wife and child!"

"His dupe and her dishonor!" exclaimed the lady firmly.

"Madam, if you really do value the life of my patient, you will exercise some little forbearance, for her sake," said the doctor.

"Oh, sir, you will take the poor little thing, will you not? Only for a little while, you know, until her father comes to protect her?" pleaded the young mother, seizing the doctor's hands and gazing imploringly into his eyes.

The doctor glanced towards the lady.

The patient saw this glance and answered it.

"I, I only have the right, to dispose of my child! I am her mother! Oh, take her at my prayer! Take her in spite of any one! Take her and guard her for me!"

Still the doctor turned towards the lady as if waiting for

her assent or dissent; though whether he would have been governed by either is a question.

"If you are willing to embarrass yourself with this wretched child, do so by all means. I shall make no objection. On the contrary, I will thank you and repay you. The girl's fears for the safety of the babe are as absurd as yours, and were probably caught from yours; but her decision is, upon other grounds, a prudent one. It is necessary, not for the child's safety, but for the erring mother's sake, that it should be removed from the premises. If you are willing to take charge of it and put it out to nurse, you may name any sum you please for its annual support—and I will double the amount and pay it in advance. What do you say?"

The doctor hesitated for a moment, while the eyes of the elder lady were turned inquiringly and those of the younger one imploringly upon him. The doctor *did* believe that the babe's safety, as well as the mother's reputation, depended upon the decision he would make.

"I will take charge of the child," he said, looking up.

The young mother grasped his hand in a passion of gratitude.

The elder lady said:

"And you will keep our secret?"

"Certainly."

"Now name your terms; name liberal ones; for they cannot exceed my will or ability to meet them."

"The terms are after considerations," said the doctor. And he went to his portable medicine chest, made up a sleeping potion for his patient, administered it, told her to compose herself, drew the curtains around her bed, and sa down beside it.

He had sat there some five or six minutes when the lady, gliding silently across the room, beckoned him to follow.

He arose and stole, on tip-toes, silently after her.

"It is nearly daylight. You should be away with the child," she whispered.

"I know it. I only waited for the mother to fall into her first sleep; which is necessary for her safety. If I had taken the child away at once, the parting would have excited her. She would not have slept. The consequences might have been serious. When I feel sure that she is unconscious, I will withdraw the child from her embrace and take it away. She will thus escape the excitement of parting with it. When she wakes she will be refreshed. You will then tell her that her own wishes have been complied with; that her child is safe in my care, and she will be satisfied. I will now go and ascertain if she sleeps," whispered the doctor.

He silently crossed the room, softly withdrew the curtains, and looked at his patient.

Yes! she was in a deep, deep sleep. Stealthily he put his hands under the bed-clothes, and withdrew the infant, and brought it out into the room.

"I am ready to go," he said to the lady.

She opened the door, and beckoned him to follow. He went up to her and whispered:

"I must have something warm to wrap this child in."

She frowned with annoyance, hesitated, and then went to a wardrobe, took out a fine white woollen shawl, and gave it to him.

Very impatient she seemed, while he carefully wrapped up the babe. And before he had well finished, she opened the door and signalled him.

He followed her very cautiously down the dark passages, staircases and halls to the outer door, which she proceeded with her own hands to unbar.

"Stay," whispered the doctor. "Now that we can converse without disturbing my patient, I wish before I go to make some inquiries."

"I would advise you to forbear doing so," replied the lady.

"But I must see my patient to-morrow. How shall I be able to do so, unless I know the name of the family, the situation of the house, and so forth?"

"I will send the carriage for you."

"At what time?"

"To-morrow night; unless there should be some imminent necessity for summoning you sooner. If there should be, I will send. You have already divined that I value the life of this young lady; and you may trust me to watch over her safety."

"Yes, I can do so."

She then unfastened the door to let him out.

The day had not yet dawned; but the storm had ceased, and the storm-clouds were parting, giving glimpses here and there of a bright star twinkling in the blue-black sky.

The deaf and dumb negro was waiting on the outside to conduct him on his way.

The doctor bowed to the nearly invisible lady, and followed his mute leader.

They went out of the grove, and through the shrubberies, and into the woods, where they found the carriage still standing, well protected by the trees overhead.

The mute took the blankets from the horses, and opened the door of the carriage. The doctor entered. The coachman mounted his box. And the carriage drove off. There was no more lashing, thrashing and crashing of rain and wind and falling trees to impede the progress of the carriage, and threaten the lives of its occupants, so they went on at a rapid rate. At a little over an hour they came out of the thick woods. And just as the day was dawning, they rolled into the streets of the village, where even the earliest inhabitants were yet in bed.

The carriage drew up at the doctor's office.

He alighted, bringing out the babe with him; and at the same moment the mute coachman put whip to his horses and drove away.

CHAPTER III.

LIFE'S NEW RECRUIT.

"What is life, mother?" "A battle, my child,
Where the strongest lance may fail,
Where the wariest eye may be beguiled,
And the stoutest heart may quail;
Where the foes are gathered on every side,
And rest not day nor night,
And the feeble little ones must stand
In the thickest of the fight."—*Anonymous.*

THE doctor let himself in with a latch-key and groped his way into the back parlor and towards a sofa, upon which he laid the child, who immediately awoke and set up a feeble wail of hunger.

"Oh, yes, I dare say, poor little one! I quite agree with you. It is time you had something to eat," said the doctor, as he struck a light.

Hugh Wynne had not been married ten years, and helped to nurse infants of his own without having learned what to do with one. So, without disturbing his invalid wife or his tired servant, he just hunted up his "nurse lamp," collected materials from the cupboard and prepared some warm pap, with which he fed the babe and stopped its cries of famine.

Meanwhile it was growing light. And by the time the doctor had finished feeding the child, he heard, over his head, the little morning cough with which his wife usually awoke.

The doctor set down the feeding cup, raised the babe in his arms and went up stairs in his wife's room, walked straight to the bed-side and laid it down beside her.

"Hugh! What is this?" she exclaimed, in unbounded astonishment, shrinking away from the baby and gazing on it.

"It is a poor forsaken child of which I have taken charge for the present, Amy," he answered, gravely.

"A foundling, Hugh! Where did you find it?"

"Not exactly a foundling, Amy. But a child that—hat—" The doctor hesitated and stammered while his wife continued to gaze at him in expectation of an explanation.

"Well, Amy, my dear, you know that we medical men, in the course of our professional practice, sometimes fall in with strange family mysteries," he said at length.

"And this is one?"

"And this is one."

"Tell me all about it."

"My dearest Amy, if I knew any thing very definite, I should be bound in honor not to divulge it, even to you, love; for you are aware of the nature of a physician's professional oath not to divulge the secrets of families; but in point of fact I have been intrusted with no secret as yet. I know nothing but what I may tell you, since the little I do know compromises no one. Still I must beg you to promise me, it shall go no farther."

"Of course, Hugh, I promise not to repeat what you tell me in confidence."

"Very well, then," said the doctor, who immediately commenced and related his adventures of the night.

Amy listened with the deepest interest and greatest curiosity. She entered into all the emotions of the situation. She wondered with the doctor and suffered with the patient. She distrusted and dreaded the stern and ruthless woman; she sympathized with the lovely young mother; and she pitied the poor discarded babe, from which she no longer shrunk, but which she gathered to her osom.

"Oh, poor thing! poor, dear, little, helpless thing! to be cast out from its own home and its own mother the very first night that it comes into the world! how cruel!" said Amy, gazing tenderly at the sleeping babe.

"I thought you would pity it! But the poor mother is even more to be pitied than the child. I feel sure that nothing but fears for its safety would have induced her to part with it."

"How dreadful, Hugh! What do you make of the whole affair?"

"As yet I am able to form no definite opinion."

"I believe the poor young lady is truly married."

"I believe that she thinks she is; but whether she really is, I cannot tell."

"And their names, Hugh? What are their names?"

"I tell you, dearest, that I do not know; that they did not tell me. And even if they had confided that secret to me, I should not be at liberty to divulge it, even to you, love."

"Certainly not; I had forgotten. And you have no idea where the house was?"

"No; the carriage left the village by the west road, and turned into the forest, and continued its way by a very circuitous route for about an hour and a half, when it stopped in the centre of another wood, and at the outer gate of the enclosed grounds in the midst of which the house stood."

"What sort of a house, dear Hugh?"

"A large, oblong-fronted house, with many windows and one large central hall door, approached by stone steps; that was all that I could see by the single flash of lightning that revealed it to me just before I entered."

"But that description suits so many houses in this neighborhood."

"I know it does. Architectural imagination takes but short flights in this region. A few items, respecting the inside of the house, however, I made note of, Amy. They may be of no use, and they may be of the utmost importance. At any rate, I wish you would remember them and —not speak of them."

"Yes; well?"

"First—the elder lady is about forty years of age; very tall and robust; very handsome; black hair; high forehead; sharp nose; thin lips; pointed chin, and dark-greenish eyes."

"Terrible! do you call that handsome?"

"It does not seem so in the description; but she is handsome for all that. Her features are delicate and regular, and her complexion fair and clear. Remember the description."

"I shall not forget it—thin lips, sharp nose, green eyes! The old cat! No wonder she wanted to devour this poor little mouse."

"The younger lady is a perfect little beauty, with jet black hair, eyebrows and eyelashes; large, soft dark eyes; little straight nose; plump lips and round chin; complexion deadly pale from illness; but no doubt of a rich peachy bloom in health."

"The little darling! I shall know her the moment I set eyes on her."

"The room in which I found her was furnished with gold-colored furniture and hangings. Remember all these things in connection with the fact of the deaf and dumb messenger, and you will be in possession of all the particulars from which I can form any future theory of the affair."

"I will remember it all! Item: deaf and dumb messenger. Item: large, oblong, stone house in a wood. Item: tall, dark, stern-looking woman of the Queen Catherine, Lady Macbeth and Lucretia Borgia style. Item: Soft, fair little beauty with dark hair, languishing eyes and pouting lips. Item: gold-colored bed-room! If ever I find myself near that house or those ladies I shall recognize it, or them, as the case may be!"

"I have felt strongly impelled to tell you these particulars, Amy! and to impress them on your memory. Try to remember them, my dear; but forbear to speak of them to

any one but myself; and to me only when you feel sure that we are alone."

"I will bear in mind what you say, my dear Hugh."

"To-night they send for me again: when, no doubt, I shall learn more, perhaps every thing."

"But not be at liberty to divulge it."

"No."

"Not even to me!"

"No, dearest; the professional oath is uncompromising," smiled the doctor.

Another actor appeared on the scene. Little Owen Wynne, a fine, sturdy, fair-haired boy of eight years old, opened his eyes, raised himself up in his little cot bed that stood in a corner of the room, looked around and said:

"Good-morning, dear papa."

"Good-morning, my son. Jump up and dress yourself quickly now. I want you to open the shop," said the doctor, drawing the counterpane over the strange baby's face, and stooping and whispering to his wife:

"Don't let the urchin see the baby yet; he would ask five hundred questions."

Amy smiled and shook her head. And the doctor kissed her and left the room

But Owen was no sooner dressed than he came hurrying to his mother's bedside, leaped lightly upon it, and began to cover her with tender caresses.

"There, darling! there! there! That will do, Owen! I wish to rise and dress, dear!" said the mother, gently repulsing her boy, while she tried to shield the covered baby from injury.

Owen began to slide down off the bed; but in doing so pressed too heavily upon the babe, which immediately awoke and began to wail.

"What's that?" cried Owen, with dilated eyes.

The game was up! Mrs. Wynne laughed and uncovered the child.

"Oh! I know now! it is the little sister you have been promising me so long!" exclaimed Owen, gazing with delight upon the morsel.

"Yes, it is a little sister for you," answered his mother. "Now go down stairs and mind the shop, like a good boy."

Owen kissed his mother and ran to obey her.

Amy, with a few pats of her mesmeric hand, soothed the baby to sleep again, and then arose and dressed herself and went below stairs.

She found the little back parlor deserted.

The doctor had probably gone out to pay an early visit to some village patient.

Little Owen had opened the shop and was standing demurely behind the counter, above which only his head could be seen, to attend to such customers as might drop in. Not that young Owen was quite equal to all the onerous duties of his position. By no means. He could, indeed, sell a tooth-brush, comb, cake of soap, or bottle of cologne-water from the fancy case on the counter; or dispense a sixpence worth of Epsom salts or magnesia from the drug-shelves; or do any little duty of that sort; but for any thing more serious, requiring more knowledge and experience, he would call his mother, who could make up a prescription as skilfully as her husband could write one.

Old Nancy, the woman-of-all-work, was in the back kitchen getting breakfast.

Mrs. Wynne bestirred herself and began to set the table, spreading over it the whitest of table-cloths; placing on it the daintiest of china, et cetera.

This little back parlor opened into a vine-clad back porch. On the right hand of this porch was a door leading into a small kitchen, whence issued the fragrant smell of boiling coffee, baking bread, and broiling fish.

Before the porch lay the kitchen garden, rich in flowers, fruits, and vegetables. Amy loved this garden as only a poor city-bred woman, who had been long denied and only

recently blessed with such a treasure, could do. She went out into it now. The sun, just risen, shone brightly upon the millions and millions of rain-drops that, left of the preceding night's storm, hung like flashing diamonds upon emerald leaves and ruby roses. In truth, bright as it was overhead, it was somewhat wet among the trees and bushes.

And if Doctor Wynne had seen her go into that bright, glittering, wet garden, he would—well I don't like to say what; he would have been very angry, that is certain. And Amy knew it. But, in truth, if Doctor Wynne had seen her she would not have gone at all. She was disobeying his orders, both as a physician and a husband, in thus exposing herself. She was breaking her marriage vow—at least that part of it in which she promised to "obey." And she knew it. But what wife does not break *that* portion of her faith every day of her life? And that she surely does so is reason enough, if there were no other, why that word should be left out of the marriage ceremony.

Amy was the most affectionate and compliant of wives; and though her husband, in his solicitude for her health, had enjoined her never to go out into the garden until the sun had dried the dew, here she was pushing her way through something worse than dew, the shower of hanging rain-drops from the previous night's storm; and actually taking delight in it! gathering the red roses with the liquid diamonds sparkling on them; cutting the green, crisp water-cresses; drawing up the pink radishes from the ground; all to embellish her breakfast table with the first-lings of the morning. She returned with her hands full; went into the kitchen first to dry her feet and her sprinkled skirts, while old Nancy washed the freshly-gathered vegetables; and then she took them into the parlor and arranged them upon the breakfast table.

Breakfast was quite ready; but they waited a little while for the doctor, who came in about eight o'clock. He

smiled with delight at the cheerful-looking breakfast table, and said, as he took his seat at the foot:

"I think you and the boy are happier here than you were in the city."

"Oh, yes! very much happier. It is so pleasant to live in the country, among fruit-trees, and flowers, and vegetables," said Amy.

"In a garden, you mean. You are not quite in the country yet."

"I call it the country, after New York. And, any way, I am perfectly happy here, Hugh."

"Perfectly?"

"Yes."

"Then you are the eighth wonder of the world!"

"I don't see why I should be. Indeed, I think a great many people might be perfectly happy if they choose to be. But, having every thing to make them happy, they choose to make themselves *un*happy about some imaginary grievance."

"I do believe you are right, Amy. But—have you really every thing you want, Amy?"

"Every thing!" she replied, with emphasis.

"Mamma, dear?" said Owen, archly.

"Well, my boy?"

"The cow, you know!"

"Oh, nonsense!" laughed his mother.

"The cow, Amy? What about the cow?"

"Oh, nothing. Only I was saying yesterday how nice it would be to have a cow, and make our own butter, and have fresh milk and cream at all times."

Doctor Wynne laughed.

"You shall have your cow, Amy," he said.

"And the hens, mamma!" said Owen.

"The hens?" echoed the doctor.

"Well, yes. I did say I wish we had some hens, so that we could have fresh eggs whenever we liked."

"Of course, Amy, you must have hens," assented the doctor.

"And the bees, mamma!"

"The bees?" exclaimed the doctor, elevating his eyebrows.

"Now, Owen, that was *your* whim," said his mother.

"I know it was, mamma! Papa, I was saying what a nice place it was under the honey locust trees, at the back of the garden, for a bee-hive, and how good it would be for mamma to have honey all the time for her colds," said Owen.

"You are right, my boy. We will try to accomplish it. We will try to gather into our village home—our *country* home, as your mamma delights to call it—every thing that will add to its comfort and beauty," replied the doctor.

And soon after he got up cheerfully, and took his hat, and went out to make his morning round of professional visits.

Owen took his Lindley Murray's Grammar, and went into the front shop to study, while he waited for customers.

Nancy came in to clear the table.

And Mrs. Wynne went up stairs to make the beds. This useful exercise was a part of Amy's hygiene.

By the time she had finished that work, and had taken up the baby, old Nancy entered the room and stopped short in the middle of the floor, and stood gazing in speechless amazement upon the little stranger.

"Hi, for de Lor' a'mighty's sake, Miss Amy, honey, what dat?" she inquired, as soon as she recovered her voice.

"It is a babe, that has been confided to the doctor's care," answered Amy.

"Whose baby?" inquired Nance, drawing near and peeping at it.

"One of the doctor's patients'."

"Lors! it didn't 'quire a conjurer nor likewise a witch to tell a body dat! But what her name, den?"

"The doctor did not tell me."

"Umph-humph! Its mammy wants to put it out'n de way," said Nance, with a sniff.

"No—she only wants to put it out to nurse. She is not able to nurse it herself," explained Amy.

"Is *you*, den?"

"No, I shall not attempt to do so. I am only taking care of the poor thing until the doctor can find a nurse, which he will be able to do in a few days."

"Well, ef ebber I did hear de likes ob dis! Jes' as if you hadn't 'nough trouble on yer own hands widout dat."

Here the babe began to cry.

"Gib it to me, Miss Amy. I take it down stairs, and stop its mouf wid somefin to eat. I done foun' dat nuss lamp all in a mess, and couldn't t'ink to save my life what de doctor been doin' 'long of it. Spects he been tryin' to feed de baby. Man feed baby! Wonner he hadn't choke it to deaf," said Nance, as she tenderly took up the little creature from the lap of Mrs. Wynne.

"I know you will be careful of her, Nance," said Amy.

"'*Her*'?—Oh! it's a gall; poor little t'ing! It's bad 'nough to put a boy away from its mammy—but a gall!"

"I think that both are equally helpless at this age, Nance," smiled Amy.

"'Deed, I dunno. Anyways, a boy soon grows able to fisticuff his way trough de world; but what can a poor little forsaken gall do?"

"She is not forsaken, Nancy."

"It do look mighty like it, dough."

"Now, Nance, I must go and look up some of my baby linen for this little thing. They forgot to send any clothing with it," said Amy, rising.

"Ah, ha! what I tell yer? Forgot to send any clothes wid it! Yes, and dey'll forget to send any arter it; and by-and-by dey'll forget *it* altogeder!"

"My husband will not allow them to do so, Nance."

Nance, grumbling at the "onnateral parients" that had sent this poor little babe out upon the wide world, carried it tenderly down stairs.

Amy went about her congenial employment of hunting up baby linen for the little visitor.

The doctor came home to an early dinner. An early dinner was another rule of the family hygiene. They sat down, that little circle of three, to a simple healthful repast of roast mutton and potatoes, followed by ripe peaches and milk.

When it was over the doctor arose to leave the house.

"Off again, Hugh?" inquired his wife.

"Off again, Amy dear. This, you know, is the sickliest month of the sickly season. People will eat such river reptiles as soft-crabs and wash them down with buttermilk and water-melons, and so they make work for their doctor. I shall be home to tea. Good-day, love."

And the doctor went out.

"You may go out and play, Owen; I will mind the shop for an hour," said Mrs. Wynne, when the table was cleared.

Owen ran away to the garden; for, city-boy like, he was enraptured with the delightful novelty, freshness and freedom of country-life, and spent all his leisure hours in the garden, weeding the ground, gathering the fruit and vegetables and tending the flowers. In this passion for the country he resembled his mother.

When Owen returned to the shop, Amy, instead of leaving it, sat down and began to teach her son the names and natures of some of the more simple drugs in common use among the country people. All the strong medicines were placed high out of Master Owen's reach, and the poisons were locked up in a glass case, of which the doctor and his wife kept duplicate keys.

Mother and son were play-fellows as well as teacher and pupil, and the hours always passed happily when they were

together. Their only regret was that they could be so seldom together in the garden, for one or the other of them was always required to be in the shop.

"Now," said Owen, at length, "now that I have learned the difference between those three white alkalies, magnesia, soda, and prepared chalk, I want to hear about my little sister. Is she my own, own little sister?"

"No, dear, not your 'own own;' only as all little girls are your sisters and all little boys your brothers," the mother explained.

"Oh!" exclaimed Owen, with an expression of disappointment. But then quickly recovering himself, he said—"Ah, but for all that, I shall love her, I know I shall, just as soon as ever she can look at me! How long will it be before she is able to look at me?"

"Only a few days, dear; but before that time she will have to be sent away to be nursed. So don't set your heart on the pet too much."

Owen ruminated a little while.

"All the boys I know have little sisters," he said. "And they are not sent away from home, neither."

Amy found no reply to make to this speech, so she left Owen in charge of the shop and went into the kitchen to prepare some delicate little cakes for tea.

The doctor, true to his appointment, came in at six o'clock.

"How is our little waif getting on?" he inquired, as he sat down to the tea-table.

"As all healthy infants do. She sleeps until she is hungry; then wakes and cries until she is fed; feeds until she is satisfied, and then sleeps again; and so around the circle of crying, feeding and sleeping. Have you found a nurse?"

"Yes; a very respectable white woman; a miller's wife, with a young child, and healthy enough to nurse two; but her charges are high, and she refuses to receive the babe

until she is paid six months in advance. I must get the money from the family to-night."

"Oh! you are not going out again to-night, Hugh?"

"I must, my dear. I promised to see my interesting young patient. They will send the carriage for me. I would rather have gone by day, but they chose to wait for the cover of darkness."

"But how absurd that is! Do they really hope to keep the secret by all this mystery? It appears to me that it is the very way to betray it!"

"No, my dear, not in this case; if the carriage were to come for me in broad daylight, all the village would see it and recognize or discover to whom it belongs, and begin to inquire why it came. By coming late at night, no one will even see it."

The entrance of Owen put an end to this subject.

After tea the doctor went into the shop to put up some medicines to take to his patients the next day; and Amy sat down to her needlework, and Owen to his lessons. And so the evening passed until ten o'clock.

The doctor closed the shop and came into the back parlor.

"Come, Amy; come, dear, you know what I told you! It is ten o'clock! You should have been in bed an hour ago. And you, also, Master Owen! Be off with yourself at once, sir!"

Owen laughed, shut up books, and obeyed.

"Come, Amy! follow! follow!"

"Oh, Hugh! no carriage yet! Surely they will not think of sending it so late as this? Or, if they do, you will not go?"

"Not go? Why, of course I must, my dear! It was two hours later than this last night when they sent for me, and in that awful storm, too! Yet I took no harm. Nonsense, Amy! don't look so pale and frightened! Go to bed."

"I know I shall not sleep a wink until you get back, so why should I go to bed?"

"Because I tell you to do so, my dear. I am your physician as well as your husband, you know."

Amy arose with a sigh, and took up the bedroom candle to follow Owen, who had blundered up the stairs in the dark.

"Kiss me good-night, then," she said.

"Why, Amy, love, what is the matter?" he asked, as he pressed her to his heart for a moment.

"I don't know. I am wretched!" And she burst into tears.

"You are very nervous to-night. If you were not my own wife, I would give you valerian; but one does not like to dose his own flesh and blood—it is unnatural," candidly confessed the doctor.

Amy wept.

"There, dear, there; don't give way to hysterics. Go to bed and compose yourself."

Amy returned the kiss that he had pressed on her lips, and said:

"I know it is only nervousness makes me cry; but I can not help it, Hugh. You are very patient with me.'

"I should be a very bad husband if I were not patient with you, Amy; and a very stupid physician if I were not patient with all women."

She dried her eyes and went up stairs; heard little Owen say his prayers; fed the baby with the pap kept warm over the nurse lamp; and then went to bed and gathered the little creature up to her bosom as tenderly as if it had been her own.

But she did not sleep; there was an awful oppression upon her spirits that she could neither understand nor overcome; it kept her wakeful and watchful. Her senses were preternaturally acute; she heard every movement, however slight, in the room below; she even heard the leaves rustle

as the doctor turned the pages of the book he was reading.

For nearly two hours she lay there with wide-open eyes and strained ears watching and listening in the darkness and the silence.

At length she heard the approach of horses, but not of a carriage. She listened acutely. They stopped before the door. The bell rang. The doctor arose and admitted some one, whose entrance was followed by muffled movements through the shop and back parlor, but by no conversation.

"It is some one come for medicine," thought Amy; "but how silent they are about it!"

But even while she thought this the doctor went out with the messenger, closed the door, and then both mounted the horses and rode away.

At the sound of their retreating steps Amy uttered a half-suppressed exclamation and started up in bed. She had not expected this departure, for she had supposed that the messenger had come for physic, not for the doctor. And now, who was it that had sent for him? She thought it must have been the unknown family to whom the cast-off babe belonged, for the doctor would scarcely have gone out to any one else, while momentarily expecting a summons from them. And they must have sent a saddle-horse instead of a carriage as a precautionary measure, lest the first night-visit of the carriage might have been observed, and the second might excite conjecture.

This did not please Amy. She feared and hated mystery at all times, and especially now that her spirits were weighed down by a dread burden that she could neither understand nor throw off.

"Oh, Heaven! how I wish this weary night was over and he was back safe!" she moaned. She could not calm herself to sleep. She could not even compose her mind to prayer. She could only lay broad awake in the darkness, silence and uncertainty, and watch and listen and dread—

she knew not what, or why. It was now the dead of night. All sounds had long since died out of the house, and even out of the street. The world seemed "blind to light and deaf to sound." But the stiller and darker it grew, the wider and wider flared Amy's eyes and ears in her insane and painful vigilance. Aye, poor Amy, watch! watch for the steps that come not back forevermore!

"Oh, that this awful night was over! Oh, that he was back safe!" she gasped, at intervals, as hour after hour of horrible, supernatural terror and suspense crept slowly, painfully on. Out of this death of silence and darkness, suddenly broke upon the startled air a cry:

"OH, AMY! AMY! AMY!"

A wild, piercing, eldritch cry—but the voice of Hugh Wynne, for all that.

Amy sprang up in bed, shaking all over, and listened.

But the cry was not repeated. Silence and darkness swallowed up all life as in death again.

Still shaking through all her frame, she threw off the covering, jumped out of bed, and struck a light. Then she opened the front window, and looked out into the village street.

All was dark, silent and deserted there. She shut the window, and went down stairs into the little back parlor, and looked at the clock over the mantel-piece. It was near four. Day would soon break—nay, must even now be breaking. She passed into the shop. Every thing remained as the doctor had left it. The front door was fastened with the latch-lock only. No one had been about.

"Could I have been sleeping, and heard that cry in my dreams only?" Amy asked herself, as she went up into her room again. No! the answer came from her perfect consciousness—she had not slept a moment—she had not even closed her eyes.

Still shivering, although it was a summer morning, she threw a shawl around her shoulders, and mounted to the

little attic chamber, above her own room, where her servant slept, and knocked.

"Who dar?" came a startled voice from within.

"It is I, Nancy. Get up, please."

"What de matter? Dat baby? 'Fore de Lord, I knowed it was goin' to be a nuisance!" grumbled the old woman.

"It is not the poor babe, Nance; she has slept like ar angel all night. It is I."

Nancy huddled on her clothes, and came out.

"Now, what de matter?" she asked.

"Oh, Nancy, the doctor has been away all night! I have not slept a wink! I have been so anxious."

"What fur? He done be 'long o' some lady, which he can't leab, till all ober, may be."

"But oh, Nancy, I am so nervous! And—and in the night I thought I heard him calling to me in great distress; that was the reason I got up."

"Oh, sho! dat was a dream. But it was time to get up anyway; and he be here soon now. So I gwine hab some strong coffee ready fur him. Good, too."

CHAPTER IV.

THE DOCTOR'S FATE.

'Tis midnight: on the hill tops brown
The cold, round moon shines deeply down;
Blue roll the waters, blue the sky
Spreads like an ocean hung on high,
Bespangled with those isles of light,
So wildly, spiritually bright;
Whoever gazed upon them shining,
And turned to earth without repining,
Nor wished for wings to flee away
And mix with their eternal ray?—*Byron.*

What had become of Doctor Wynne? When at ten o'clock, by his request, Amy had left him to retire to bed,

the doctor remained reading up a difficult case, and making notes in his tablets, until twelve, midnight.

When the clock struck the hour, he closed his book, saying:

"I will wait twenty minutes longer, and if the messenger does not come, I will go to bed."

Before ten minutes were over the messenger arrived. The bell rang.

The doctor opened the door.

"You are late," he said; but then recollecting the incapacity of the poor deaf and dumb negro that stood before him, he only beckoned him to come in and sit in the shop, while he himself looked up his hat and gloves. When he was ready he went out, followed by the mute.

It was a clear starlight night; the late moon was just rising over the sea, and silvering its waves and sandy beach, and lighting the village street and the forest trees beyond.

By its light the doctor saw the mode of conveyance that had been prepared for him.

"What! horses and no carriage?" he inquired, looking round at the negro.

The man stood stolidly, giving no reply and no sign of intelligence.

"Bah! how stupid and forgetful I am, to continue talking to a deaf-mute," said the doctor, laughing, as he threw himself into his saddle.

The negro mounted his horse and led the way. The doctor followed. Now that the sky was clear, and lighted by moon and stars, he was resolved to observe the road very closely, and so discover and identify the strange house of his last night's visit.

They passed up the village street, and entered the forest that lay beyond it. He knew they were going inland, that is, westward; but as they proceeded the forest grew thicker and thicker; and when they had ridden about a mile, his conductor suddenly turned into a bridle-path, on the north

side of the road. The doctor followed. And still the shades of the forest grew darker and darker with the thickly-clustering foliage. The path was difficult and dangerous. Every minute the riders were obliged to put out their arms to force aside the obstructing branches of the trees that crossed their path or hung low over their heads. It was circuitous, too, for the doctor, being unable to take an observation from the stars, that were concealed from his view by the close canopy of leaves over his head, soon lost his reckoning, and could only guess in a general way that their course lay somewhere between the north and the west.

An hour's slow ride through this almost impenetrable forest brought them at length to a stone wall, enclosing some shrubberies.

The doctor recognized this wall. It was, of course, the same that he had seen on the last night.

The negro dismounted and signed for the doctor to do the same. Doctor Wynne complied. And the negro secured the two horses and opened the gate.

The doctor followed his conductor into the shrubbery It was the scene of the previous night, plainly seen by moonlight instead of half concealed by storm. It was an old, neglected plantation of trees, bushes, and shrubs, all sadly wanting cultivation. At the farther end, there was the grove of trees, through which glimpses of the great old house could be seen. They went on, passed through the grove and got to the house—a large, oblong, gray stone building, with stone steps leading up to a stone portico, and a massive oaken door; on each side of this door two tall windows; on the second story five windows, one being directly over the door; on the roof five dormer windows, very ugly and top-heavy, and suggestive of headache; rising from the roof two tall chimneys; on each side of the house and behind it lofty Lombardy poplar trees.

All these details had escaped the doctor's attention on the previous dark and stormy night; but they impressed

themselves on his memory now; and he made a mental note of them; for he felt convinced that his conductor had brought him a roundabout route to reach the house, and that the family within would try to mystify him.

All was dark and still; there was no sign of life or light within or around the house.

The negro knocked softly. The door opened silently; a hand protruded, seized the doctor and drew him in.

Then the door was shut and locked; and the strange woman, for of course it was no other that admitted him, whispered:

"Follow me."

He obeyed.

She led him up the same way that he had gone on the previous night; opened the same door and admitted him into the same bed-chamber.

It was dimly lighted as before.

The doctor went up at once to the bedside of his patient.

She was lying awake, motionless, and waiting for him.

"My child, doctor?" she inquired, looking anxiously in his face.

"Is quite well, my dear young lady. And you?" said the doctor, taking her hand.

"Me? Oh, nothing ails me, doctor! Nothing bodily, I mean! I have mental trouble enough to kill me, though!" she sighed.

"Trouble of your own bringing on, as all your trouble always was," said the grim woman.

The doctor gave her a rebuking look, turned to his patient and said:

"My dear, look away from the dark and towards the bright side of your life; anticipate the return of your husband and the possession of your child, and domestic love and happiness."

"Her husband! I beg you will cease that, doctor," said the lady, with a bitter sneer.

The doctor did not answer; did not seem to hear; he was bending over the young mother, and giving all his attention to her, for she was saying:

"Is my child with you, doctor?"

"Yes, my dear young lady; my wife is taking care of her; and she could not be in better hands."

"Heaven bless you, dear, dear doctor," she answered, fondly clinging to his hand; then, after a few seconds, she added—"You will know all about me soon, doctor, and know that I am blameless; but, in the meantime, I cannot bear that so good a man as you are should think ill of me for a moment."

"I do not, my dear child, I do not," said Doctor Wynne, earnestly.

"I am very young, I know; scarcely past childhood, myself; but oh, doctor, I am a good girl, indeed I am! I mean," she explained, with a smile and a blush, "I mean, I am an honorable wife and mother. I have done no wrong; not even an act of disobedience to my parents, doctor! indeed I have not."

The doctor was surprised and staggered. He had supposed that the girl had run away to be married, and thus involved herself in trouble; but now she declared she had committed no wrong, not even an act of disobedience. And when he looked in her face, he believed her words and told her so.

"Are you deceived or deceiving?" sarcastically inquired the lady.

"Neither! Oh, you know that I am neither the one nor the other," she answered.

"Doctor, if your patient requires no farther medical treatment, I think you had better retire with me. I have a matter of business to settle with you," said the lady.

Doctor Wynne secretly agreed with her so far as that he was anxious to return home and end the suspense of his

wife, who, some rare instinct warned him, was not sleeping, but painfully awaiting his return.

He stooped over his patient:

"Good-night, my dear young lady. You are doing very well; so keep up your spirits, and hope for the best. We will take good care of your child; and every day I will come and tell you how she is. Good-night."

"Good-night, dear, dear doctor! Good-night! Heaven bless you! Oh, I thank you so much! so much!" she said, clasping his kind hand and pressing it to her lips.

He lingered until she let go his hand, and then he followed the lady.

She took the dim light from the mantel-piece and led the way into an adjoining room, furnished as a library, with book-cases, writing-desks, secretaries, reading-chairs, &c.

She sat the taper down on a table; pulled out a drawer; took from it a roll of bank-notes, and placing them in the doctor's hands, said:

"There are a hundred dollars; that will be sufficient to purchase what is needful for the wretched child, and to pay a nurse a quarter in advance. At the end of three months I will give you another hundred. Will that meet your views?"

"It will be at the rate of four hundred dollars a-year. Two hundred, I should think, would be amply sufficient to supply so young a child with every necessary, comfort and luxury."

"I thought so. Therefore, you see I have doubled the amount, as I promised you that I would."

"Very well, madam; as you please. I shall lay by the surplus for the future benefit of my little protégé. I would like to give you a receipt for this money. In whose name shall I make it out?" inquired the doctor, taking his pencil from his pocket.

The lady smiled grimly, as she said:

"I see your drift—your ruse; it is useless. I cannot give

you my real name. I do not choose to give you a fictitious one. Take your money and go, and if you are wise do not seek after forbidden knowledge."

"Madam, I wish to be courteous, but I cannot be false; so I tell you that whether I seek to do so or not, I shall surely discover the name of this family."

"How, sir?"

"By simply keeping my senses about me. The name and nature of such an important family as this seems to be, cannot be concealed in a neighborhood so sparsely settled as this. The information will come to me; indirectly, perhaps, but surely. I shall not, however, abuse my knowledge; I shall keep the secret as faithfully as if it had been confided to me. I counsel you, therefore, for your own good, as you have been compelled to confide in me partially,—confide in me wholly. Physicians should not be treated with half-confidence."

"Thank you, sir; but I prefer to be the judge in a matter so nearly concerning myself," said the lady, rising, as she signed for his departure.

The doctor took the hint, and followed her example.

"I shall see my patient again to-morrow," he said, as they stole down the stairs together.

"Certainly; I will send the horses for you."

"Thank you; but I need not give you that trouble; I have a horse of my own; and, though the way is a circuitous one, I can easily find it."

The lady looked keenly at him.

"So! that is your first discovery," she said.

"Yes, madam; but not my last."

They had now reached the front door.

She opened it noiselessly. He went out and she shut it behind him.

The deaf mute was waiting outside with the horses.

The doctor mounted and rode off, followed by his attendant. As the doctor rode he meditated on the strange

events of the last two nights. He felt more convinced than ever, that if he had not encumbered himself with the poor outcast babe, that grim, ruthless woman would have found some fatal means of getting rid of it forever. She was anxious for the life of the young mother, and for the death of the young babe. But *why* was she concerned for the mother, whom she evidently hated rather than loved? That was the mystery of mysteries! While the doctor ruminated on these subjects, they rode through the shrubbery, out of the dilapidated gate, and into the bridle-path leading through the forest. Here, of course, they were obliged to go very slowly and carefully, putting aside with their arms the obstructing branches of the trees that constantly crossed their path.

"This road must have been disused for a long time," said the doctor, aloud.

There was no answer.

"Bah!" he exclaimed, with a sudden recollection of his attendant's infirmity. "Bah! how difficult it is to get used to a deaf mute!" He turned his head and looked over his shoulder. But the deaf mute seemed as inaccessible to sight as by sound. He was nowhere to be seen.

"He is lingering behind, poor soul! He is lazy; perhaps sleepy; and no wonder, for he has been up two nights as well as myself, and I am confoundedly sleepy!" said the doctor to himself, as he almost nodded over his horse's mane. But it would not do for him to go to sleep on that road, even if the horse had been the slowest and safest of the species; for there was serious danger of getting his eyes scratched out or his head knocked of by the intersecting branches of the trees that still obstructed the way. He listened to hear his deaf and dumb attendant breaking through the path behind him, but in vain; there was no sound but that of his own horse's hoofs trampling down the fallen leaves and twigs as he stepped slowly on. He

looked behind again. There was no sign of the negro to be seen.

"I really do believe the fellow and his horse have both fallen asleep or turned back; they are not near me, certainly," said the doctor, as he once more urged his horse forward. He came at last out of the narrow bridle-path into the old disused carriage road, that was also closely roofed by the meeting branches of the trees.

He rode on now more at ease; but looking back occasionally in search of his mute attendant, who was nowhere visible.

"Yes, decidedly, he has returned to the house and left me to find my way home alone; well, that I can do. But what will his mistress say to his leaving the horse for a clue to the owner?" inquired the doctor of himself.

Suddenly he heard the brushwood on the right side of the road crackle as under the tread of a stealthy foot. He turned shortly and looked in the direction of the sound. He saw nothing; but he heard the sound again. He felt a vague uneasiness. Such a sound at such an hour, and in such a place, was unusual, to say the least. He heard it a third time, and more distinctly than before. It was a footstep slowly and cautiously creeping along, and crunching down the dried leaves and twigs of the undergrowth. The step was much too heavy for that of a fox or a dog, and no larger four-footed animal could possibly make its way through that close thicket. It was then the stealthy step of a powerful man, hiding himself in the bushes.

Now there was good cause for uneasiness; for, though there were no such creatures as footpads or highwaymen known in the country, yet there existed at that time in the woods of Maryland a banditti of a more dangerous sort, namely, a band of runaway negroes, driven by oppression from their homes, and made cruel by suffering, and reckless by despair, who had, with the amazing cunning of their kind, successfully eluded all pursuit, and hid themselves in the

depths of the boundless forest, whence they sometimes issued at night to rob, murder, fire—in a word, to commit the most appalling outrages upon unarmed travellers, isolated houses, and unprotected women. Not long before this they had robbed and murdered a harmless old peddler who had had the misfortune to stray within their reach. And though high rewards had been offered for the apprehension of the perpetrators of this crime, they had not yet been arrested.

While his horse ambled slowly by, the doctor thought of all these things and gazed distrustfully into the thicket. He was unarmed and alone, and riding on a slow, not to say a lame, horse. Suddenly, as he gazed, the moon shone out of a dark cloud—shone into the thicket; and—yes, great heaven! shone upon the glittering barrel of a musket protruding through the leaves!

To face danger rather than flee from it was the doctor's instinct. He wheeled his horse; at the moment the musket was pointed towards him and belched fire and smoke with a deafening report.

"Oh, Amy, farewell!—Oh, God, forgive my sins and receive my spirit for the Redeemer's sake!" cried Hugh Wynne, as he felt the bullet strike his throat and the warm blood gurgle up to stop his breath. Another moment and he fell from his saddle.

CHAPTER V.

THE MESSENGER.

Thou tremblest; and the whiteness of thy cheek
Is apter than thy tongue to tell thine errand.
Even such a man, so faint, so spiritless,
So dull, so dead of look, so woe-begone,
Drew Priam's curtain in the dead of night
And would have told him half his Troy was burnt.—*Shakspeare.*

In the doctor's pleasant little home all were preparing to receive him and comfort him after his night of supposed watchfulness and fatigue.

Leaving her old servant to follow, Amy went down into her bed-room, where the child that had been committed to her care was already awake and crying with hunger. With the aid of the nurse-lamp she prepared some food and fed the babe, then washed and dressed it and got it to sleep.

After which she made her own neat morning toilet, and waked up Owen and left him to dress himself.

Then she went below stairs and opened the house and shop.

The sun was just rising. It was a delightful morning, resplendent with all the dewy freshness and brightness of the summer.

She threw open the windows of the back parlor that overlooked the vine-clad piazza and the luxuriant garden. The sun was shining brightly, lighting up all nature with dazzling splendor; flowers were blooming and giving out fragrance; dew was sparkling on every green leaf and glowing petal; birds were singing from every tree and bush; fruit was ripening on bough and vine. The air was filled with beauty, fragrance, music, light and life.

Amy's spirits arose. The glorious sun that had dis-

pelled the shades of night banished the gloom from her mind as well.

She bustled about the cheerful room, setting in order what was orderly before; cleaning what was clean, and polishing what was bright. She picked up the threads from the delicate straw-colored matting; adjusted the folds of the white muslin window-curtain; set the table for breakfast; and then went out into the garden to gather her morning tribute of fresh salad, fruit and flowers, to add to the charm of the breakfast-table.

Poor Amy! She was preparing to receive the doctor, with all the tenderness of a loving wife for a weary husband, and all the honor of a proud hostess for a distinguished guest.

Her second in command, old Nancy, was ably co-operating in the kitchen, from which the appetizing odors of hot coffee, broiled chicken and rice waffles issued.

Owen came down with his smiling "morning face," kissed his mother, and went into the shop and took his place behind the counter to wait for customers.

When all was ready, Amy, not to lose time, took from her little work-basket a half-finished shirt bosom, and sat down by the pleasant window and began to stitch. Very, very pretty did Amy look as she sat there in her pure white cambric wrapper, with her dark hair smoothly braided each side her delicate pale face, and wound in a mass at the back of her graceful neck. Amy was expecting the advent of another child, and hoping, as her health was now so much improved, that the little stranger, when it should arrive, would be permitted to remain with her, and not follow all its feeble little sisters into the other world.

Buried in sweet reveries, Amy sat sewing until the clock struck nine and startled her.

"Bless me! Nancy!" she cried.

The old woman came to the door.

"Nancy, it is nine o'clock! And the doctor has not come!" she said, in agitation.

"Now dere now, Miss Amy, honey, don't you go and 'sturb your mind 'bout no doctor! You knows yourse'f how dese here 'omen's cases—which it is likely as he is called to one ob dem—is sometimes so tedious and 'tracted as would wear out de patience ob a saint, much more a 'oman! But if it don't wear out she, why should it hurt he, or 'noy you?"

"What is it you mean?" inquired Amy, whose northern ears could scarcely make out Nancy's southern tongue. "Do you think that he is attending some lady?"

"Yes, honey, some lady berry bad; Lord help her, poor thing."

Amy dropped her work and went into the shop and opened the front door and looked out into the street.

But there was no sign of the doctor.

This was a very quiet little village. On her side of the street the houses were mostly little two-story framed buildings, with white walls and green blinds; and each house stood detached in its own little garden. But on the opposite side of the street there was a closely-built row of houses, some framed, some bricked, some private dwellings, some village shops.

Away down the street, towards the wharf, were some imposing-looking buildings of red brick. They were tobacco warehouses, where the chief export of Maryland was brought in from the country, and stowed previously to shipping; for Rogues' Harbor did a neat little business of its own.

Away up the street, inland, were some still more imposing-looking edifices. There were the Episcopal church, churchyard and parsonage, which were situated on what I shall call Amy's side of the way. Opposite to these, on the other side, was the court-house, and its adjunct, the jail. Beyond this the almshouse.

Such was the village. East of it was the sea, enlivened here and there with a passing sail. North, west and south of it was the forest, broken at intervals into plantations and farms.

Amy stood looking up and down the street in anxious expectation of her husband. But there was no indication of his approach. Indeed, there was but little life in the quiet village. The young man that kept the dry-goods store on the opposite side was lounging in his front door while waiting for custom. An old-fashioned carryall stood quietly at the gate before the parsonage house, waiting perhaps to take the Reverend Mr. Morley and his wife on a round of pastoral visits. A group of idlers were collected at the wharf down the street, where a schooner was moored. A negro girl, carrying home a basket of provisions, sang, as she sauntered at her ease along the opposite sidewalk. These were all the signs of life to be seen.

Amy sighed, returned to the house, sat down, and resumed her needle-work. Another anxious hour passed. The clock struck ten. Amy threw down her work and started up in irrepressible excitement. Owen came in from the shop. Nancy bounced in from the kitchen, and began to expostulate:

"I say, Miss Amy, chile, you gwine wait breakfast all day for *he*? Don't you s'pose dat poor boy dere starvin', let alone *we*?"

"Oh, Nancy! I hate to eat breakfast without him. I never did in my life."

"Now, dat what I call downright childish! Hi! you gwine fas', and make dat dere boy fas', 'cause de doctor can't get away from dat dere lady, which I s'pose she mus' be berry bad indeed, and badder dan dat. I bet any t'ing dey done gib him a good breakfas' long 'fore dis. You eat yourn, chile."

"Well, Nancy, put it on the table. It is very vexatious, though, not to have my husband home to his meals. A doctor's life is a dog's life."

"So it is, honey. But it mought be worse - a great deal worse."

"Worse? I don't see how."

"Ef he had to swallow his own physic, honey," said Nancy, with a chuckle, as she went to bring in the breakfast.

Amy and her son sat down to the table. Amy, scolded, coaxed and encouraged by Nancy, managed to drink a cup of coffee and eat a little of the rice waffles and broiled chicken. Owen was as hungry as a wolf in winter, and made a hearty meal. What ever takes a boy's appetite away? Not anxiety, not even illness, certainly not waiting, for that increases it. What, then, takes a boy's appetite away? I'll tell you: a full meal, nothing else.

When breakfast was over, they arose from the table.

"Oh, *do* keep the coffee and things hot for him, Nancy. He *may* come in directly. And whether he has had breakfast or not an hour or two ago, he may be ready for luncheon after his hard ride," said Amy, as once more she tried to settle herself at her needle-work.

"My stars! it's mos' time to put on dinner. And I shouldn't be s'prised ef he didn't get 'way from dat lady—how berry bad she mus' be, to be sure!—till *dat* was on de table. What we gwine to have for dinner?"

"Lamb, and spinage and potatoes, and boiled custard. Don't bother me, Nancy! I am quivering from head to foot with uneasiness," said Amy, looking as though she were ready to burst into tears.

Nancy cleared the breakfast table, and beat a retreat into the kitchen.

Owen took his geography and atlas, and went to study while he minded the shop.

Amy sat sewing and compelling herself to be still until the wailing of the waking child above struck on her ear. She called Nancy, who hurried in.

"You must bring the cradle down here. I cannot run

up and down stairs twenty times a day; but bring the baby first," she said, irritably. It was so unusual for Amy to be irritable; but suspense had tried her temper.

Nancy brought down the screaming baby and placed it in her lap, and then went after the cradle, which she also got down, but with a great deal of dragging and bumping and thumping.

When the child was once more fed and put to sleep in the cradle by its foster-mother, who kept her foot on the rocker while her fingers plied her needle-work, old Nancy went back to her own department, and the room returned to its dreamy stillness.

Hour after hour crept slowly by; but how anxiously, painfully, tediously, heaven only knows! The monotony of the day was only broken by an occasional customer entering the shop to buy a dose of salts, a comb, a pen, or some such trifle. Sometimes Amy, unable to bear the suspense, bounded up and walked the floor impatiently, or opened the door and looked up the street eagerly.

The dinner hour drew on.

"It's two o'clock. Is us to wait dinner for he?" inquired the cook, putting her head in at the back door.

"Yes, oh, yes, Nancy! He *must* be home to dinner, you know! He never misses," said Amy.

They waited one hour—two hours; the clock struck four.

Again Nancy put her head in at the door:

"You see now it wasn't no use to wait! He aint comin' home to dinner. Better us eat ourn. Mus' I put it on the table?"

"Oh, Nancy, do as you please! I am almost crazy with anxiety," said Amy, throwing down her work and beginning to walk the floor in a distracted manner.

"Now dat what I call downright onreasonable! You go on jus' as ef he had a missin' a mont' 'stead of a day!

'Sides which—how I gwine set de table if you keep on circumambulatin' ob de room dat a way ?"

Amy threw herself down in her chair and burst into tears.

Nancy called out:

"Here! Marse Owen! Marse Owen! come here to your ma!"

Owen laid down his books and came in; saw his mother in tears, and came to her side and put his arms around her neck and kissed her, and said:

"Don't be scared, mother. Just you think; it is only since last night father has been away. So isn't it likely that he is with some one who is too ill to be left?"

"Maybe so, Owen; maybe so, dear. But, oh, oh, oh, I am so distressed! I was distressed even last night. And think how many weary hours have passed since then!"

"I know, mother; but just consider. Nothing could hurt father, he is so big and strong. And if he was taken ill he would send some one to tell you. But if he was only watching by a patient, and expecting him to get better or die very soon, why he wouldn't think it worth while to send you word, you know. So don't you cry any more, mother."

And Owen finished as he had begun, with a kiss.

"I believe I am more foolish than my servant, and more childish than my child," said Amy, wiping her eyes.

"T'ank y' for my half ob dat compliment," said Nancy, as she spread the cloth.

Dinner was set on the table. Amy forced herself to eat a little. Owen ate with his usual appetite.

And when the meal was over, and the service cleared away, the mother and son returned to their usual avocations and the room to its usual stillness.

But as the afternoon wore on, messengers sent express by impatient patients, who had been nervously awaiting the doctor's daily visit, came to inquire why he had not appeared, and to request that he would do so immediately.

To all these Amy had but one answer to give:

"The doctor went out to visit a patient last night and has not yet returned. We fear that his patient may be in extremity, and that the doctor cannot leave."

And with this answer one after another went away

Day declined; the sun was on the edge of the western horizon. Again Amy started up and threw down her work, exclaiming:

"Oh, Owen! Owen! I shall go mad if this suspense lasts much longer! Go to the parsonage and ask Mr. Morley if he has seen or heard any thing of the doctor! He may have done so, you know! When a person is very ill indeed, the parson is sent for as well as the doctor, and they often meet beside the sick-bed! Run, Owen, and inquire!"

The boy took his cap from the peg and ran out.

Amy walked up and down the floor for nearly half an hour, when at length Owen returned.

"Well?" inquired the anxious wife.

"They have not seen him since Sunday, mother," said her son.

"Oh, heavenly powers, this is dreadful!" exclaimed Amy, in an accession of anxiety.

Owen essayed to comfort her, using the same means that he had found effectual before—tender caresses, gentle words, and such arguments as his young mind suggested—That his father was watching some dangerous case, and expecting it to end in one way or another very soon, when he would hurry home to quiet her anxiety—and so forth. Owen's argument was rational enough, but it did not convince his mother. Her instincts all warned her that something unusual, terrible, perhaps fatal, had happened.

The sun set. Twilight deepened.

The strange baby woke and cried. Amy fed it, undressed it and put it to sleep for the night.

The candles were lighted. Tea was brought in.

"Oh, take it away! Take it away! I cannot touch any thing!" said Mrs. Wynne.

"If not for your own sake, for your unborn child's you should try to keep up your strength, honey," Nancy said.

Amy drank her tea under protest.

Even Owen's spirits were beginning to flag. He could eat nothing. But he went frequently to the shop door, to look out upon the night.

Amy laid aside her sewing and sat with her head leaning on her hand, watching and listening. Owen brought his book and sat down beside her. Old Nancy finished her kitchen work and came in, and squatted down in a corner of the room, with her elbows on her knees and her chin in her hands. She, too, now shared the general anxiety.

The clock struck ten.

Owen got up and closed the shop for the night, and then came and resumed his seat beside his mother, but he no longer attempted to read. Amy was as white, cold and still as marble—her strained eyeballs only showing that she lived. Old Nancy gazed at her in ever-increasing alarm, until at length she said, in a coaxing manner:

"Miss Amy, honey, de clock done struck ten. You know how dat is your bed-time. And ef de doctor—Hebben pertect him!—wur here, he'd 'vise you to 'tire."

"Nancy, if I were to lie down I should lose my breath and die! I will not stir from this room until I have heard from my——"

Her words were cut short by the ringing of the shop-door bell.

She started up to answer it in person, exclaiming, joyfully:

"It is he, at last!"

But her son was before her. He flew to the door and tore it open.

Oh, Heaven!

It was not the fondly-expected husband and father!

To all these Amy had but one answer to give:

"The doctor went out to visit a patient last night and has not yet returned. We fear that his patient may be in extremity, and that the doctor cannot leave."

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"They have not seen him since Sunday, mother," said her son.

"Oh, heavenly pow[illegible]. Only, my dear, dear lady, try in an access[illegible]o try to be calm!" said the minister, beginning to shake with terror at the task that was before him.

"Oh, Heaven!" she rapidly aspirated. "You tell me to be calm when you yourself are trembling with distress. Your lips tell me to be calm, while your face tells me to go mad! My husband! My husband! Where is he? What has happened to him?"

"Mrs. Wynne, for Heaven's sake!—Now don't, my dear, good child!—Owen, come to your mother!"

"My husband! My husband! What has happened to him?"

"Now don't—now don't——"

"Tell me! Tell me! Or I shall go mad!"

"It is nothing but—It is only a——He has met with an

"Oh, take it away! Take it away! I cannot touch any thing!" said Mrs. Wynne.

"If not for your own sake, for your unborn child's you should try to keep up your strength, honey," Nancy said.

Amy drank her tea under protest.

Even Owen's spirits were beginning to flag. He could eat nothing. But he went frequently to the shop door, to look out upon the night.

Amy laid aside her sewing and sat with her head leaning on her hand, watching and listening. Owen brought his book and sat down beside her. Old Nancy finished her kitchen work and came in, and squatted down in a corner of the room, with her elbows on her knees and her chin in her hands. She, too, now shared the general anxiety.

The clock struck ten.

Owen got up and closed the shop for the night, and then came and resumed his seat beside his mother, but he no longer attempted to read. Amy was as white, cold and still as marble—her strained eyeballs only showing that she lived. Old Nancy gazed at her in ever-increasing alarm,

Old Nancy she said, in a coaxing manner:

demanding meanwhile: [illegible] struck ten. You

"Oh, Marse Morley, sir! what's it all [illegible] Doctor—Heb-happened of? Is any harm come to Marse Doctor [illegible]

"Hush, Nancy! Ask no questions. Attend to your mistress," replied the minister, gravely.

"Oh, sir, please tell me truly! Is it what my mother was afraid of? Have I no father?" pleaded Owen.

"My poor, dear boy, you have a Father in Heaven," replied the minister, gravely and kindly.

"Oh, mother! poor, poor mother! What will become of you?" exclaimed the boy, falling upon the bosom of the insensible woman and covering her pale, cold face with tears and kisses.

"My dear Owen, my little man, *you* must be your mother's stay now. She has only you," said the minister.

But Owen could not just then answer. He could only weep over her, kiss her and lay his warm face against her marble cheek.

"I have noticed you in the shop and in the Sunday-school, Owen. And I have noticed that you are a brave, good lad. You can be a great comfort to your poor mother, Owen, the very greatest comfort, the only earthly comfort that she can have. Pray to the Lord, my boy, that he will give you grace to perform the duty that lies before you," continued Mr. Morley, impressively.

"Oh, I will, sir, I will," Owen tried to answer through his choking sobs and blinding tears.

"Well, weep, my boy, weep now, while you may; but after this try to control your tears; try to be a courageous boy, for your mother's sake."

"Oh, I will, sir! I will! I will try! But, oh, I am so sorry for *her!*" cried the boy, with a fresh burst of tears, as he turned the cold, cold face of the stricken woman towards his own and pressed it there.

Meanwhile old Nancy was bathing her mistress' hands with ammonia, or holding aromatic salts to her mistress' nose.

But neither the caresses of her son nor the efforts of her servant availed to restore Amy Wynne to consciousness.

"She will never recover, while lying in this cramped position on this short sofa. We must get her up stairs and lay her upon her own bed, where she will be more at ease," said the minister.

He was a tall, stout man; strong and active despite his sixty years and his white hair. And he lifted Amy as though she had been a child, and preceded by old Nancy carrying a candle, he bore her up the stairs and laid her upon her own bed.

"What child is that?" exclaimed the minister in surprise, as his eyes fell upon the baby lying snugly at the back of the bed.

"Oh, nebber mind de chile, Marse Minister, it ain't nothing but a 'fondling' as Marse Doctor, poor man, fotch home night afore last and was gwine for to put out to nuss some'rs," replied old Nancy, taking up the baby and laying it on Owen's bed.

The minister asked no more questions; for his attention was absorbed in his efforts to restore Amy to consciousness. He deluged her face with eau-de-cologne; he placed the pungent ammonia to her nose; he clapped the palms of her hands; but all in vain; Amy showed not the least sign of life.

In the midst of his efforts he heard the shop-bell ring sharply.

"Good Heaven, I had forgotten! How could I have forgotten?" he exclaimed, dropping the hand upon which he had been at work.

Owen started to answer the bell.

"No, no, my boy! Don't you go to the door! I command you stay where you are!" exclaimed Mr. Morley, in alarm, laying his hand on the lad and forcibly detaining him.

Owen looked up in distress—a suspicion of that which was at the door seemed to have crossed his mind.

"Stay with your mother, bathe her temples with ammonia, and put it occasionally to her nose," said the minister, putting the vial in the boy's hands and hastening down stairs, for the bell had rung a second time and more sharply than before.

Old Nancy had not been forbidden to follow. So she left her mistress to the care of Owen, and silently crept down stairs to the intervening door between the back-parlor and the shop, and there she watched and listened.

The front door was open and the refreshing night-air blew in. Mr. Morley was standing there, talking in a subdued tone to a group of grave-looking men without.

"But it will shock his wife so much, poor thing," expos-

tulated one of the outsiders in one of those keen whispers that penetrate farther than any ordinary tone of conversation can.

"Oh, no; she is up stairs in her own room, lying in a dead faint. Nothing can shock her just now, poor woman. You may bring it in," replied the minister.

The door was thrown wide open. And the men, with some long dark object, covered with a cloth, came lumbering up to it. They turned their burden edgeways to get it through the door, and thus they brought it in, through the shop and towards the parlor, the minister walking before to open the way.

Old Nancy beat a hasty retreat and hid herself on the stairs, which you know ascended from the back parlor. And there she continued to watch and listen.

The men brought their burden in and set it down against the wall, while they drew out the table and put up its leaves. Then they uncovered it, and Nancy, peering from her hiding-place, recognized the dead body of her master.

It was just what she suspected it to be; but still she uttered a half-suppressed cry and covered her face with her apron to shut out the awful sight. But soon curiosity got the better of horror, and she uncovered her face and peeped again.

They were stretching the dead body on the extended table. When they had done that, they took the cloth and covered it reverently from sight, and then stood solemnly looking at each other and at their minister, as if they were waiting for further suggestions or instructions as to what they should next do.

"I thank you, friends, for the help that you have given me," the minister began to say, but he was interrupted by one of the men muttering:

"Nothing but Christian duty."

"I think there is nothing more that you can do here to-night. But, Naylor, you will oblige me if you will call at

the parsonage and ask for my son and tell him what has happened, and request him to break the news gently to his mother, and also to explain to her that she must not expect me home to-night, for I feel obliged to remain with the afflicted family until morning. Can you do this, Naylor?"

"Yes, sir, certainly; and any thing else you would like done."

"Thank you, I will not tax you farther. But, Purdy, you have a good horse, I believe?"

"Yes, sir; and very much at your service as well as his owner."

"Thank you. Then, if you will be so good, I will get you to ride over to the coroner, who lives about a mile out of the village, and inform him of what has been done, and ask him to be here very early in the morning to sit on the case, as the body cannot be permitted to remain above ground long in such weather as this."

"Very well, sir; I'll see the coroner to-night."

"And, friends, of course you will all be required to be here to attend the inquest early in the morning."

"Yes, sir," answered half a dozen voices.

"That is all."

"Good-night, sir!"

"Good-night, my friends. But take this warning home with you, that 'In the midst of life we are in death.' Therefore 'Be ye also ready; for in such an hour as ye know not the Son of Man cometh.' Good-night."

The crowd of men departed, and the minister shut the shop door after them, locked it, and returned up stairs to the sick-room, old Nancy scuttling up before him.

"How is she?" he inquired, approaching the bed.

"Oh, sir, no better! Is she dead? Oh! is she dead?" gasped Owen, in a voice of anguish, as he fixed his strained eyes on the minister's face.

"No, my child. I have seen people in longer swoons than this. We must persevere until we bring her out of it,"

replied the minister, taking the ammonia from Owen and going vigorously to work again.

The boy breathed a sigh of relief; but in a moment more his young face became overshadowed and quivered with emotion as he whispered the dread question:

"What is that down stairs, Mr. Morley?"

"My dear boy, do not ask me now; and do not leave the room. Think that your dear father is in heaven, and turn your attention wholly to your mother, who needs all your care. Here! chafe this hand while I chafe the other," said the minister, with the design of keeping Owen in the sick-room until he himself should be at liberty to leave the bedside and take the boy down to look at the dead body of his father, and stand by him through the agony that the sight of it would be sure to cause him.

Owen complied.

All three were now zealously at work, striving to bring the poor stricken one to consciousness.

But for a long time their efforts were unsuccessful; so that even Mr. Morley, with his experience in long-protracted swoons, became alarmed.

At length, however, signs of returning life were to be observed in her pale, cold, rigid form. Her pulse moved again; her throat fluttered gently; her eyelids quivered; a faint color dawned in her cheeks; her lips trembled and parted with a sigh; her eyes opened; and she gazed around in utter bewilderment. She looked at Owen, at Nancy, and finally at the minister, as she said:

"Owen, why are you not in bed? And Nancy, what on earth are *you* doing in here? And you also, Mr. Morley! What has happened? Has the doctor returned? *Oh! Father of Mercies! I remember it all now!*" she suddenly shrieked, covering her face with her hands, and falling into violent convulsions.

"Oh, mother! mother! mother!" cried Owen, throwing

his arms around her and trying with his slight boyish strength to hold her still.

"Get away, Owen. You are not strong enough for this work, my boy. Let me come to her," said the minister, gently disengaging the lad's arms, and leading him from the bedside. Then he turned to the old woman and said:

"Nancy, watch beside your mistress, and keep her from throwing herself off the bed, while I go down stairs and prepare a composing draught."

Nancy, frightened half out of her wits, took her station on one side of the sick-bed, while Owen came to the other side, and between them they kept the convulsed form from falling to the floor.

Meantime the minister went down stairs in search of the required drug. He paused a moment beside the dead body extended there upon the table.

"Poor, poor friend! if you were alive you would know exactly what to give her—which I do not. Ah! you will never help her, or any of us, more!" he sighed, as he left the parlor and passed into the shop, and began to look about among the drugs for something that might be of service to the sufferer.

"I know that this will quiet her, at least," he said, as he took down a bottle of morphia and dropped a few drops into a glass, with a little sugar and water.

This preparation he took up stairs and offered to Amy. The spasms had exhausted their first violence, and she was lying now in one place, but trembling excessively.

"Drink this, my dear child," he said, putting the glass to her lips with one hand while he raised her head with the other.

Poor Amy was all docility. She swallowed the medicine and fell back again on the pillow.

The minister sat down beside her to watch the effect of the dose. Soon he had the satisfaction of seeing the tremors that shook her form subside, and the acute anguish

of her face soften, and her eyes close, and her breathing become regular. At length he knew that she had succumbed to the influence of the drug, and had fallen into a deep sleep.

"Your mother sleeps; she will sleep until morning. Go you to bed now, my boy; it is past midnight," said the minister, addressing Owen.

"Oh, Mr. Morley! Oh, sir, I cannot sleep! How could I sleep with my father lying dead down stairs? Oh, sir, now that my mother is better, let me go down and sit by *him*. You know where *he* came from some one always watches by the dead, and it seems so hard-hearted to leave him all alone!" pleaded Owen, with tears swimming in his eyes.

"Poor boy! well, I will take you down myself; but I would not like to leave you there," said the minister, rising and giving his hand to Owen.

And so they went down stairs and stood beside the dead.

The minister reverently turned down the cover, revealing Doctor Wynne's face.

It was a grand face; grander even in death than it had been in life. It was calm, noble, holy, and seemed to have been turned by death into sculptured marble.

Owen's emotion had been terrible to see. And the minister feared that it would again break out with violence. But no! great as his grief was, it seemed to be held in check by a deep and reverential awe. Owen gazed a long time upon the beloved and venerated face, and then, turning towards the minister, and speaking in a low tone, he said:

"I see no wound. How did it happen?"

"My boy, his death was sudden and painless. And he was prepared to go. Let these considerations comfort you and withhold you from pressing questions which only distress you and me. To-morrow there will be an investiga-

tion, and you will be informed of all that may be discovered. There is really nothing known as yet but what you see before you. There, my dear boy. Let us leave the room," said the minister, reverently replacing the cover.

"Oh no, Mr. Morley! no, sir, I cannot leave him! I must sit and watch his body until the morning. Oh, pray do not try to prevent me."

"My poor child, I only fear the effects of such a death-watch upon your mind and imagination," said the minister, kindly.

"Oh, do not fear that. *I* am not afraid; and besides, I shall say my prayers and read the Bible. Oh, pray do not try to prevent me, sir," earnestly pleaded Owen.

"Well, well, my boy, just as you please. But if you should find your strength and spirits unequal to the task, you must come up stairs, or call me. I shall remain in the little room immediately over this, which adjoins your mother's apartment, so that I may be at hand in case she should awaken and have another return of her spasms. Good-night, my boy. May the Lord be with you," said the minister, laying his hand in benediction upon the head of the lad.

The minister went up stairs, took another look at his patient, who was still in a deep sleep, and then, leaving old Nancy to watch beside her bed, he went into the adjoining room and took up his position as sentinel in case his services should be required.

CHAPTER VI.

THE DAY'S REVELATIONS.

One fire burns out another's burnings,
One pain is lessened by another's anguish:
Turn giddy and be helped by backward turning:
One desperate grief cure with another's languish. —*Shakespeare.*

Morning dawned at length upon the desolate house.

Old Nancy left the bedside of her mistress, and went into the back room, and reported to the minister that the patient had slept heavily since midnight.

Then she passed down into the back parlor, where she found poor Owen sitting—pale, but composed—beside the dead body of his beloved father.

"Oh! my dear child—my dear, dear child! Ain't you been to sleep all night, Marse Owen, honey?"

"Oh! no, no, no, Nancy. How could I sleep?"

"True 'nough, honey! true 'nough. But now you go up and sit by your poor mother, and watch her, and don't make a bit o' noise; and if she wakes up, come right down and tell me. And if dat baby—Lord forgive dem as hev it on our hands!—wakes up, you take it up careful, and don't drap it, and fetch it right down here to me, for fear it should cry and 'starb your mother. I gwine in de kitchen to make de fire, and put on de kettle, 'cause de minister must have a cup o' coffee afore de crowner comes."

"Yes, Nancy. Must I open the shop windows?"

"Not for de whole worl', honey! Not even a 'pot'ecary's shop must be opened when dere's anybody layin' dead in de house."

Owen reverently uncovered his father's face, and kissed it tenderly, covered it carefully again, and went up stairs to take his place by his mother's bed.

Old Nancy hurried into the kitchen, and commenced her preparations for the morning meal, murmuring to herself:

"'Tweed, dey'll just hab to 'umble demselves to eat deir breakfas' in here, 'cause it stands to reason dey can't eat in de parlor 'long side o' *dat*. And dere ain't no other place. Laws! laws! to think of it. He so well and hearty, and likely to live a hund'ed years! and to be cut off in his prime! And be so good and kind to everybody in de whole worl', and to be 'sassinated in cold blood—as I makes no doubts he was! Oh, dear! oh, me! Oh, de poor doctor! Oh, de poor, sickly woman! Oh, de poor little boy! de widow and de orphan! What will dey do widout him! what will dey do!" cried the kind-hearted old creature, as she dropped into her low chair, threw her apron over her head, and wept bitterly.

But she had too much to do to spend her time in useless tears. She soon wiped her eyes, and with a few subsiding sobs arose, and put on her old bonnet, went into the darkened shop, took a little money from the till, and crept out of the front door, closing it softly after her.

Though the sun was not yet up, the villagers were; and little crowds of people were gathered at the street corners, engaged in eager conversation.

"Dey all done hearn about it a'ready," sighed Nancy, as she ran across the street, and into the opposite shop, in dread lest somebody should see her, and stop to ask questions; for old Nancy was the very antipodes of a gossip; so entirely so, that she had the reputation of being a sort of misanthrope; but that was unjustly given to her.

When she got into the shop, she asked the young man behind the counter for half a yard of narrow black crape.

"There is a report going around that there has been an accident at your house. I hope it is not true," said the shopman.

"Marse Lacy, sir, you ain't got no call to hope nothing

'tall about it. And no more do I know nothing 'tall about it. Just you gi' me de crape, child."

"At least, I trust that the family are all well?" said the shopman, measuring off the crape, and rolling it up.

"Marse Lacy, honey, I nebber ax you to trust, neider! I done fotch de money to pay you," answered Nancy, in a discouraging manner, as she received her parcel, and paid the price.

"At all events, if I can be of any use, aunty, let me know," said the young man, with persevering good will.

"I reckon how you done been all de use you can be to *me*, anyhow. Good-morning, young Marse," said Nancy, leaving the shop.

She flitted across the street again; tied the crape to the handle of the shop door, to warn all visitors and customers of the presence of death; and then entered the house, closed and fastened the door, and passed through into the back kitchen.

"De laws bress my soul alibe! Ef ebber I did see sich a sight in all my born days!"

This exclamation burst from Nancy at the sight of Owen sitting in the low chair with the baby on his knees, and deliberately feeding it with warm pap, while the nurse-lamp burned on another chair near him.

"What you do dat for? What you know 'bout babies? You gwine gib it de cholic? You gwine choke it to death? You gwine poison it wid your messes? Tell me dat, you mischievous boy, you?" demanded Nancy, wrathfully.

"No, aunt Nancy; it is all right. I am feeding the baby with good food."

"What you know 'bout feedin' babies?"

"Why, I saw how mother lighted the lamp, and prepared the food, and gave it to the baby; and so, of course, I knew how to do it."

"Why didn't you leabe it 'lone till I come?"

"Because the baby woke up, and when I brought it

down stairs to give it to you, you were gone; and the baby cried louder and louder, so you might have heard it all over the house; and I was afraid it would disturb mother; and I knew it was hungry; and so I made the pap, and fed it; and see how good it is now."

The tears came into old Nancy's eyes.

"You are your father's son all ober, Marse Owen; and de Lord will bress you. Where would anybody find a boy o' your age, first wid courage enough to watch by a dead body alone all night long, and den wid tenderness enough to feed a young baby widout hurtin' of it? Your father'll nebber die while you libs, Marse Owen. Keep on, chile! You knows how to do it. Gib de little thing as much as ebber it can eat; while I sets de coffee, and puts de rolls to bake," said Nancy, bustling about the small kitchen to hasten the preparations for breakfast.

The baby, satisfied with food, fell asleep on Owen's knees; and then the boy took it up stairs, and laid it on his own cot, and resumed his watch beside his mother's bed. In passing through the back room, he had noticed that the minister had fallen asleep in his chair.

When breakfast was ready, old Nancy went up and awakened him, saying, in apology:

"I didn't like to 'sturb you, sir; but you see I thought how you'd better eat your breakfast in peace afore de crowner fellows come to make a muss."

"Quite right, Nancy. How is your mistress?"

"Still in de same heavy sleep."

"Dear me! I am afraid I gave her an overdose of morphia. I will go in and see."

"And, sir, please make Marse Owen come out wid you and eat some breakfast. Dat poor boy ain't closed his eyes de whole night."

Without replying, the minister went into the sick chamber, pressed Owen's hand affectionately, and bent down to look over Amy.

Apparently satisfied with his examination, he silently beckoned Owen to follow him, and left the room.

"Nancy, you had better go and take Owen's place beside his mother. I think we can manage to wait on ourselves at the breakfast table," he said.

"Yes, sir. You'll find it ready in de kitchen, sir. I hope you'll excuse eatin' in de kitchen for dis once, sir; 'cause, you know, we wouldn't set de table in de parlor, and dere was no oder place."

"Say no more about it, Nancy; such trifling inconveniences are not to be thought of on such a solemn occasion as the present," said the minister, as he led Owen down stairs into the kitchen, where they found a comfortable meal prepared.

Poor Owen, as the little master of the house, stood at the head of the table, to do the honors to the guest sitting at its side. He poured out the coffee and offered the hot rolls and the lamb chops. And the minister made a hearty repast; but the boy ate nothing. I said some little time since, that nothing but feeding takes away a boy's appetite; but on this occasion, Owen's formed an exception to the rule.

"Eat something, eat something, my boy! You must keep up your strength for your poor mother's sake! You are all that is left to her, you know," said the minister.

Owen obediently put a morsel of meat in his mouth and attempted to swallow it. He succeeded; but almost at the cost of strangulation.

"Oh, sir, I cannot; food chokes me. Please do not ask me to try again," he said.

"Well, well, I won't. But drink some coffee, then! Make it strong, and put a plenty of milk and sugar in it; and it will be almost as nutritious and strengthening as meat," persisted the minister, who was eating his own lamb chop seasoned with walnut catsup, with great relish.

Owen obeyed, and drank a cup of coffee.

Before the minister finished his own breakfast, the shop-door bell rang sharply.

Owen got up to answer it.

"Yes, you may go now; it's only the coroner," said the minister, seeing the boy hesitate.

Owen went and opened the door.

But it was not the coroner. It was old Mrs. Morley, the minister's wife. She was a nice little bit of an old lady, with a fair, round, benevolent face, and fine, white hair. And she was dressed in a black silk gown and mantle, and a black straw bonnet with a full white frill inside around her face.

"Dear, dear, dear child; how is your poor mother?" she inquired in the gentlest of voices.

"Asleep, ma'am," replied Owen, trying valiantly to keep back his tears.

"That is good. And my husband, where is he?"

Before Owen could answer, the minister, who had heard his wife's voice, advanced from the back part of the house and met her.

"Oh, Isaac! what a dreadful thing! I was so shocked when I heard it that I could not sleep all night! And late as it was, I had a great mind to come here then! Poor, poor woman! How does she bear it?" inquired Mrs Morley.

"Badly enough! As badly as possible! But she is now sleeping, under the influence of a powerful opiate."

"Dear, dear me! what a terrible dispensation! And in her situation, too! I should not wonder if it killed her."

The minister touched his wife's arm and glanced at Owen, as if entreating her not to alarm the boy.

"I will go up and sit with her until she wakes, and then see what I can do for her," said the old lady.

"Do, my dear; and send Nancy down to put the house right. The coroner will be here presently. And as for me, I must go directly to the undertaker and make

arrangements for the funeral, which must take place to-morrow at furthest," said the minister, attending his wife to the foot of the stairs.

"You have not heard any more about how it happened, have you?" whispered the old lady.

"No, not a word more than what Naylor has probably told you. It was Naylor who found the body."

"But what is thought about it, then?"

"Why, of course, that it was the work of the runaway negroes."

"Yes, I suppose so! How dreadful! Was he robbed?"

"We do not know. We are not at liberty to examine the body until the coroner's inquest. Indeed, strictly, we were not at liberty even to remove it from the position in which it was found until the arrival of the coroner; but I could not endure the idea of leaving it in the open road, exposed to the elements all night, and so I took the liberty of ordering its removal."

"And you did quite right, my dear. Where was it found?"

"In the Black Woods where the peddler was murdered."

"Ay, no doubt the poor doctor was killed by the same party that robbed and murdered the peddler," said the old lady.

And just then the shop-door bell rang again.

"That is the coroner. Hurry up stairs, my dear," said the minister.

But as his wife looked around she uttered a faint shriek. Her eyes had just fallen on the form of the dead body on the table, that in the darkened room, and covered all over with dark cloth, had escaped her attention until this moment.

"Oh! I want to look at it," she said.

"No, no, my dear, not now! Owen is letting in the coroner. It will not be a pleasant scene for you. Go up stairs, my dear, and watch with the poor bereaved wife.

You shall see the face of our friend before the coffin lid is closed upon it."

With a deep sigh the old lady went her way up stairs.

"Oh, Nancy! Nancy! This is a dreadful piece of work!" she said, going to the bedside and speaking to the old negress, while looking upon the sleeping patient.

"Law! is it you, mum? It is berry good in you for to come to de house ob mourning. Dreadful piece ob work, mum! Yes, indeed it is, and dreadfuller dan dat!"

"How is *she*?"

"Oh, mum! don't ax me! She war in convulsions till Marse Minister gib her something as hev her into this deep sleep. And she done been sleeping so ebber since midnight last night. 'Deed, ole Missus, dis ain't no nateral sleep," said Nancy, in alarm.

"I see that it is not. But perhaps it is better that she should sleep to-day; naturally or unnaturally. The excitement of the inquest and the funeral might otherwise prove fatal to her. Now you are to go down stairs, Nancy. I will take your place."

"Thank you kindly, mum," said the old woman, rising.

"Good Heavens above!" exclaimed the minister's wife.

Nancy stopped and turned around to see what was the matter.

The old lady had taken off her bonnet and carried it to Owen's cot to lay it down there, when her eyes had fallen on the form of the sleeping baby.

"Why, I had no idea that your mistress was so near her time! I didn't know that she was confined. When was this child born? Is it a boy or a girl?" inquired the old lady, uncovering the child and staring at it.

"Laws, mum, that ain't *our* baby. It is a poor fondling, as our doctor, poor gentleman, fotch in to take care of for a little while till he could put it out to nuss," said Nancy, approaching the cot.

"Dear me! when was that?"

"Only the day before he—was—killed," answered Nancy, beginning to sob.

"Is it a boy or a girl?"

"It is a gir—ir—irl!"

"Well, there, my poor soul, I will not ask you any more questions, I see it distresses you. Go down stairs and try to compose yourself. Give your mind to your duties; and they will take it off from dwelling on these dreadful things," said Mrs. Morley, kindly, as she covered the baby up and went and took her seat beside the sick bed of Amy.

Old Nancy went down stairs, where she found the parlor and shop full of men, who were wonderfully quiet, considering the crowd and the close quarters. But no doubt the appalling nature of the occasion that had brought them together exercised a subduing influence upon them.

The coroner stood in a corner of the room, where, with the assistance of his clerk and of the minister, he was quietly empanelling a jury.

Nancy slunk through the crowd and went into the kitchen to eat her breakfast and clean the place. And as the old woman ate and drank to satisfy the natural cravings of her appetite, she bitterly reproached herself for hardness of heart in being able to eat or drink at all.

Meanwhile the coroner, still with the help of his clerk and of the minister, sent everybody out of the back parlor into the shop, so as to restore order, and then called them in singly and by name, as the jury was formed to sit on this case.

When the twelve men who had been selected for this grave duty had been sworn in, the coroner proceeded to have the witnesses called.

And first—as the last, or one of the last persons who had seen the deceased alive, poor little Owen was called.

The boy came before the coroner, looking pale, sad and weary, but very composed.

"Do you know the nature of an oath, my boy?" inquired Coroner Colburn's clerk.

"Yes, sir, I do."

The oath was administered to the child and the examination commenced.

"When did you last see the deceased?"

"On the night before last, sir, at ten o'clock."

"Where?"

"In this room, where he spent the whole evening with my mother and myself."

"What happened then?"

"He sent me and mother to bed and stayed up himself, waiting to be sent for to a patient."

"How do you know that he stayed up for that reason?"

"Because I heard him talking to mother about it, sir, and saying that he expected the carriage to be sent to take him to his patient."

"What was the patient's name?"

"I do not know, sir. I never heard him mention it."

"Do you know if the carriage was sent for him?"

"No, sir; I do not; I went to bed and went to sleep; so I knew nothing that happened in the night."

"And in the morning?"

"In the morning, sir, father had not returned home. And mother and I waited for him all day; but he did not come. And I never saw him again until I saw him—— there," said the poor boy, breaking down and bursting into tears.

"You may sit down now, my lad," said Hays, the coroner's clerk.

And Mr. Morley took Owen kindly by the hand, and made him sit beside him on the sofa.

"Thomas Naylor!" called out the clerk.

And Tom Naylor, the tax-collector, came in from the shop, where all the witnesses and all spectators were crowded, and stood before the coroner.

The oath was administered.

"What do you know of this case, Mr. Naylor?"

"Well, sir, I found the body."

"Under what circumstances?"

'Well, sir, I had been out collecting taxes in the county all day, and was rather late getting home. And it was a little after sunset that I was coming through that part of the forest called the 'Black Woods,' where the peddler was murdered, when I saw something lying right in the middle of the path in front of me. At first I couldn't tell what it was. I thought it was some sort of an animal. Then, as I got nearer, I saw it was a man, and I thought he was drunk or asleep, I didn't know which to call it. At length, as I got nearer still, my horse began to stick up his ears and back and shy, and he wouldn't budge forward a step. And, indeed, to tell the truth, the path was so narrow that there was no room to pass without riding right over the man. So I just dismounted and tied my horse to the branch of a tree beside the path, and walked up and looked down at the man. And I saw that he was dead; but I did not see who he was because his face was turned down, as if he had bit the ground; as I have heard that men who are shot to death are apt to do. Well, sir, I turned his face up, and then I saw that the murdered man was Dr. Hugh Wynne. And then I noticed that there was a gun-shot wound on the right side of his neck, just above the collar-bone. The wound was a deep round hole, stained with powder, and shrunken inward as if it had bled inside. After I had made this examination I moved the body to the side of the path, and led my horse past it, and mounted him and rode into the village, and called at the parsonage, and sent for Mr. Morley to come out and told him what had happened. And he got his carriage ready, and got help. And we went out and brought the body in, and brought it here. And we, that had the body on a bier that we borrowed from the undertaker, stopped outside, a little way from the house,

until the minister could go in and break the news to the doctor's wife. Then we brought the body in and laid it here. And that, sir, is all I know about it."

"A very clear statement, Mr. Naylor! But stop a bit. Did you examine the pockets of the deceased to ascertain whether he had been robbed?" inquired the coroner.

"No, sir; neither I nor my companions. We did not think it necessary to do so; I mean we did not think it proper to do so; we thought all such investigations were to be left to the coroner."

"You were quite right. You may withdraw."

"The Reverend Isaac Morley will stand forward."

Mr. Morley, who, upon account of his clerical character, had been allowed to remain in the room, although all other witnesses were banished to the shop except while they were under examination, now presented himself.

He declined to take the oath; but he made an affirmation, and submitted himself to be questioned.

He said that at about half-past eight o'clock on the preceding evening, he had been called out to the door to see a visitor. And that there he found Mr. Thomas Naylor, the tax-collector, who told him that he had discovered the dead body of Doctor Wynne, with a bullet-hole in the side of his neck, lying in the bridle-path leading through the Black Woods, near the spot where the peddler had been murdered. That upon hearing this, he, the witness, ordered his carriage, and summoned help, and repaired to the spot, where they found the body in all respects as described by the preceding witness. That they brought him home and deposited him on that table, where he now lay before the coroner.

Mr. Morley was then permitted to sit down, and the name of—

"Benjamin Purdy" called.

Mr. Purdy, the village blacksmith, came and stood before the coroner. And being sworn and examined, corroborated the testimony of the preceding witnesses, but presented no

new facts. And when he retired from the stand, one after the other of the men who had assisted in bringing home the body were sworn and examined. And, one after the other, they corroborated the testimony of the preceding witnesses, but offered no new facts.

When the last witness had retired, the coroner went on to the examination of the dead body.

There was no surgeon present to trace the pathology of the wound and give a scientific description of the manner in which it had produced death. But it required very little science in any one looking upon that little round, deep, dry and blackened hole in the side of the dead man's neck to know that he had died of suffocation from the inward bleeding of the severed blood-vessel.

They next examined the pockets of the deceased and found that they—the pockets—had been rifled. His handkerchief, gloves, purse, and portable case of instruments were all gone. His watch was also gone.

This examination concluded, the coroner sent away all outsiders, and the jury deliberated with closed doors for about half an hour and then announced their verdict—which verdict was worthy of all the village Dogberries that ever lived and lied:

"We find that the deceased Hugh Wynne, Medical Practioner of 'Rogues' Harbor,' came to his death by a wound in the neck made by a bullet shot from a gun held in the hands of some—*run-a-way negro* unknown."

The italics are the reporter's own, of course.

This absurd verdict met with universal approbation, as such absurdities are very apt to do.

And such good speed had they made that as early as ten o'clock the coroner, the jury and the crowd evacuated the premises and made room for the undertaker to come in and prepare for the funeral.

While Mr. Saybell was engaged in his melancholy office, under the instructions of the Reverend Mr. Morley, they

were interrupted by the sudden descent of the minister's wife from the room above.

She came down stairs looking alarmed and flurried.

"Oh! do, do send off to Snowburg for Dr. Canning. She is very ill. She woke up about twenty minutes ago in a high fever and raging delirium, and the fever and the delirium have been gaining strength ever since. I have been doing all that my limited experience suggests; but, Lord, what is that in such a case as this? Do, do send for Dr. Canning," she pleaded.

"He is sixteen miles off; but he is the nearest physician, I do believe. I will go myself and fetch him along with me, my dear," said the good minister, taking his hat and gloves at once, and hurrying off towards his own home to get his fast horse.

The minister's wife returned to her post by the bedside of the sufferer.

Amy lay there, no longer with a pale face and closed lids, silent and motionless; but with highly-flushed cheeks and bright, staring eyes, raving in delirium, and rolling her head from side to side.

It required all Mrs. Morley's firmness and self-possession to sit quietly by the bed and watch her; but the old lady was patient and courageous, and never left her afflicted friend for an instant, even to take necessary refreshment.

At noon, however, old Nancy brought her up a dish of chicken soup, neatly served up on a waiter, and she partook of it with benefit. And at the same time Nancy carried the weeping baby down into the kitchen, that she might attend to it there.

The undertaker and his assistants left the house; and the harassed family, or what was left of it, were permitted to have a little quiet.

It was very late in the afternoon when Mr. Morley returned, bringing Dr. Canning with him.

The doctor was introduced into the sick-room. He

made a careful examination of the patient, and pronounced her illness to be congestion of the brain, brought on by some severe shock of the nervous system. The drug-shop was conveniently at hand, so he took prompt measures for her relief. First her beautiful hair was cut off, and ice was applied to her head, and counter-irritants to the back of her neck and to her wrists and ankles; and then the proper medicines were administered; and lastly the doctor sent off the minister's wife to bed, and promised to sit by the patient all night himself. He did so; watching the case with great interest. And though Amy became a little quieter, she still rolled her head and muttered in a gentle delirium throughout the night. Mr. Morley had ordered Owen to bed very early in the evening. He himself at length lay down beside his old wife in the back room up stairs, and snatched a few hours of repose. About midnight, also, poor old Nancy, having settled up her kitchen, sought her own humble bed in the attic. And darkness and stillness and silence brooded over the desolate house.

Old Nancy, the last in bed, was also the first up. She had a cup of coffee ready for Doctor Canning when he came down stairs. And with the earliest dawn the doctor left the bedside of his patient, and knocked at the back room door to arouse the old couple.

"How is she this morning, Doctor?" inquired the voice of Mrs. Morley from within.

"Quieter, but still delirious. If you will hurry out, ma'am, I will give you directions for her treatment during the day; for I must be off to my regular patients."

Mrs. Morley lost no time in making an elaborate toilet, but came out almost immediately.

The doctor put into her hands written directions for the treatment of the sick woman, and then, after hastily drinking the cup of coffee brought to him by Nancy, he mounted his horse and departed.

All the morning Amy lay in the same quiet, gentle delirious state, slowly rolling her head from side to side, and softly babbling unmeaning words. Mrs. Morley never left her bedside, even to take her breakfast, which was therefore brought up to her by Nancy.

At ten o'clock the funeral of Doctor Wynne took place. Poor little Owen, in a hastily got up suit of black, attended as chief mourner. The body was taken to the church for the funeral services and was afterwards interred in the church yard.

And Amy, lying in her sick-bed gently rolling her head from side to side and softly babbling, knew nothing of all this.

When the funeral was over, Mr. and Mrs. Morley were both obliged to go home to look after their own family affairs. And old Nancy and little Owen were left in charge of the house and shop, and the sick woman and young baby.

CHAPTER VII.

THE WIDOW'S STAY.

His eyes are like the eagle's, yet sometimes,
Liker the dove's; and at his will he wins
All hearts with softness, or with spirit awes.—*Home.*

Fearless he is, and scorning all disguise,
What he dares do, or think, though men may start,
He speaks with mild, yet unaverted eyes.—*Shelley.*

Amy Wynne suffered all of physical agony and mental anguish that a human being could endure and survive.

Stunned into insensibility by the tremendous blow that had fallen upon her, she had remained for a long time unconscious of all that was passing around her. And her awakening to life again was only a return to grief and despair, so acute and intense as to plunge her into a brain

fever, to which succeeded a coma so deep as to resemble death.

During this period of her illness, the outcast child remained in her chamber, and friends passed in and out fearless of disturbing her, for nothing could disturb her then.

For the most part of the time old Nancy watched in the sick-room, and little Owen minded the shop. But when domestic affairs required the presence of the old woman down stairs, the boy left his place behind the counter and took hers beside the bed, and, almost heart-broken, gazed at the white, rigid, insensible form before him. It was like gazing upon the corpse of his mother.

At length there came a crisis in her illness—a crisis that the doctor, who came a long distance twice a week to see her, knew would be for life or death. She was aroused from her coma by the sacred pangs of maternity. The forsaken child was carried out of her chamber; Owen was also banished from the scene; but often crept up-stairs in a frenzy of anxiety to listen and watch and inquire at his mother's door, and was as often rebuked and threatened and driven away by old Nancy, who, with her gossips, held possession of the chamber.

At last, after a night of intense suffering and extreme danger, Amy gave birth to another child—a fine, healthy girl, that promised to live and do well.

It was strange that Amy survived, but she did so, and fell into a long, refreshing sleep, from which she awoke late in the afternoon.

Almost her first thought then was of her darling, banished little son, and she longed for his presence and sent for him.

Old Nancy went down with the message. She found Owen, pale, patient, and anxious, waiting in the shop.

"Well, I s'pose, now you'll be satisfied; for the dear knows as you've been worse nor a thorn in my side, or a blister on my back, for the last two days, with your running arter me and axing questions!" said the old woman.

"Is mother better?" breathlessly inquired Amy's son.

"Yes, she's all right, and has sent for you; so now you can go up and see her while I kindles the fire and puts on the kettle for tea."

"Oh, thank the Lord! Oh, with all my heart, thank the Lord!" exclaimed the boy, impulsively starting off in a run.

"Stay," said old Nancy, catching him by his arm—"not so fast and not so loud! She can't bear a noise yet."

Like magic fell the warning on little Owen's ears, subduing him to the utmost quietness of motion, so that he noiselessly ascended the stairs, and entered the dark and silent room.

"Come to me, Owen; come to me, my own boy," said Amy, lovingly holding out her arms to him, as he groped his way through the shadows towards her bedside. He approached her with as much of awe as of tenderness, because for so many weeks she had hovered on the shadowy line that separates the two worlds of the visible and the invisible, that to her young son she seemed as one returned from the dead.

But when he felt her arms around him, tenderness overcame awe, and he burst into tears and wept silently.

"My poor fellow; I heard you at my door very often yesterday, my boy, and my heart yearned to you and I longed to let you in, Owen," she said, gently caressing him.

"Oh, mother, I was so troubled! But I prayed—oh! I prayed all the time to the Lord that you might live," said Owen.

"He has heard you, my dear."

"And oh, how I thank him because you are better!"

"That is right, my son. Many people pray to the Lord or help, but forget to thank him when it has been given."

"I will not, mother. I will never forget to be grateful," said the boy.

And then silence fell between the mother and son for a

few minutes, during which she silently caressed him. At length, when his emotion had somewhat subsided, she laid her hand tenderly on his head and said:

"Owen, my son, do you know that you are now our only earthly stay?"

"Yes, mother dear, I know it; and though I am only a little boy, I feel that the Lord will make me strong for your sake," said Owen, stooping and kissing her.

"Poor little man!" murmured Amy, dreamily.

"I will work for you, mother, never fear," said the boy, repeating the kiss.

"Owen dear, there is another to work for. The Lord has sent me a little daughter and you a little sister: I have no one now to show her to but you. But you will welcome her and love her, will you not, dear?" said Amy, uncovering a small bundle that lay by her side and displaying a little pink baby to the wondering eyes of the boy.

"Oh, yes, mother dear, I will love her and work for her too. I will work for you and for *both* little sisters," answered Owen, with a boy's unbounded confidence and undisciplined enthusiasm.

"Both little sisters, my love, what do you mean?" inquired Amy, uneasily.

"Oh, for this little sister and the poor little orphan one"

"Oh—you mean that unfortunate babe! Isn't she taken away by her friends yet?" inquired Amy, in dismay.

"Oh no, mother dear, not one of her friends has been near her. We haven't any idea yet who her friends are. We were waiting for you to get well to tell us."

"And I—have very little to tell. Is it possible that no one has been to inquire for that child?"

"There was an old woman came a few days ago, and wanted to take the baby away with her, but I didn't like her looks at all, and I wouldn't let her have the baby."

"Why not, my dear? Wasn't she a friend? Didn't she come from the child's family?"

"Oh no, mother dear; she only heard we wanted a nurse for the baby and she wanted to carry it to her granddaughter, who had lost her own and would have been glad to get ours."

"Ours, Owen?"

"Yes, mother, she is ours until her friends come for her, isn't she?"

"I don't know. Where is the unfortunate child now?"

"Down stairs. Nancy took her out of your room early yesterday morning, for fear she would disturb you."

"What can I do with that child?" exclaimed Amy, in consternation.

"I can work for her, mother; I can work for her as well as for you and for this little sister."

"My poor little Don Quixote! how much faith in yourself you have!" said Amy, gazing proudly and fondly on her little son.

"Yes, I have so, mother! and faith in the Lord too! I know I can earn a heap of money. I know I can, mind you!" said Owen, nodding his head confidently.

"Can you, my darling? I would like to know how?" demanded his mother, with a pensive smile at his earnestness. It was the first wan smile that had dawned on Amy's face in the dark night of her sorrow, and Owen hailed it as a herald of the coming day. "I would like to know how you will earn so much money?"

"Why, in the same way that I have been earning it all along since you have been ill; by standing behind the counter and selling things out of the shop—mostly fancy things like fine tooth-combs, and shaving soap and penknives and tooth-powder and such; though sometimes I sold salts and soda and magnesia, and such. La! why, mother, some days I have taken in as much as two dollars!"

"Indeed!"

"Yes; and I have always put one-half of the money away, to keep up the stock with, and gave the other half to Nancy to keep the house with."

"My prudent little son!, Who would thought you possessed so much foresight?" smiled Amy.

"Oh, it was not my foresight! I only remembered what my father——"

Owen suddenly paused in dismay.

Amy threw her hands up and covered her face.

And a dead silence fell between them.

Now, in truth, at their first meeting, and during their whole interview, the thought deepest in the heart of the widow and the orphan had been the thought of the dead husband and father; but neither had dared to give it utterance; each had feared to breathe his name, lest by so doing they should lose the small degree of self-control they possessed; until now that the boy's earnest impetuosity broke the spell, and an awful silence followed the utterance of that "one loved name."

Amy veiled her face and wept softly. And Owen sank on his knees, and got possession of one of her hands, and covered it with kisses and bathed it with tears.

It was a signal instance of the boy's newly-acquired power of self-control that he refrained from throwing himself upon his mother's bosom, and weeping tumultuously.

"He is in heaven, mother; dear mother, he is in heaven; try to be quiet," he whispered through his tears.

"I know it, my darling—I know it; and I will try," murmured Amy.

And after a little while she wiped her eyes, and raised Owen from his kneeling position, so that he once more stood beside her.

"And don't be afraid, mother. Indeed, I can make money enough for you and for both little sisters," he said, stooping over her and kissing her.

"I know you will do your best, my darling, and I believe that the Lord will bless your efforts; but, Owen, my little man, I fear that we cannot afford to keep the strange baby—I fear that we shall be obliged to send her away."

"Oh no, no, no, mamma! do not send poor little babe away. She doesn't cost much, indeed! She eats such a little, little bit—only a little drop of milk and a little dust of flour stirred up in some water, and boiled and sweetened! Why, the cat costs more than she does, mother. And you wouldn't keep the cat and send her away, would you, mother?" pleaded Owen.

Amy smiled again at the earnestness of his manner and the quaintness of his argument, as she replied:

"It is not only the cost, dear Owen—though that will increase at the rate of compound interest every month—it is not the cost but the trouble, my dear."

"Oh, mother, dear, she gives so little trouble! Half the time while Nancy was waiting on you, I made her food in a little tin-cup and fed it to her. And she would drink a teaspoonful and then smile in my face. And then another teaspoonful and another smile. Just as if she was thanking me for it. And then when I lay her in her cradle again, she lies there and watches me with her soft dark eyes, while I go around putting away the things. Why, it is such a pleasure to take care of her that it is scarcely any trouble at all! Why the guinea-pigs give more trouble than she does. And you wouldn't keep guinea-pigs and send her away, would you, mother?"

Again Amy smiled at her son, as she answered:

"I do not know, dear; I cannot decide yet."

At this moment there was a fumbling noise outside of the door, followed by the blundering entrance of old Nancy bearing a small tray, upon which was neatly arranged the tea and toast she had prepared for the sick woman. She came in grumbling:

"I shall fall down and butt my brains out, and break my

neck yet, and smash all the tea-things, and spill all the tea, a-groping up them there narrow, crooked stairs, I know I shill. Here, Miss Amy, you jes got to drink up this bowl of tea and eat up this round o' toast without no more nonsense about it, 'cause you done fas' long enough. And, Marse Owen, you go right straight down stairs and eat your supper; it is already fixed for you on the kitchen table. There's a chop, and a piece o' cheese, and some rolls, and a mug of new milk. Now, mind you eat up every thing on the table, 'cause there ain't a bit too much there for you," said the old woman, as she sat the tray on the stand by Amy's bed and hurried Owen away.

"But, Nancy, if I eat up all the supper, what will *you* do?" smiled Owen.

"I do berry well. Don't you fear for *me*. I takes care of *my*self. I got some tripe and inguns kivered up in a saucepan by the kitchen fire; so you do as I tell you. And don't you let me find so much as a crust o' bread, or a paring o' cheese, or scarce'y a bare bone o' the chop left on the table when I come down stairs. You eat it all, 'cause you done been starving of yourself long enough. And whoever heered tell of a growing boy doing the like? Miss Amy, if you believe my racket, that boy has hardly put bit or sup between his lips since you've been here," said Nancy, with much emphasis.

"Oh, my poor Owen!" exclaimed the mother, looking anxiously at her son.

"Never mind, mother! I can eat now! Nancy shall see!" answered the boy, cheerfully.

"Well, go along, then, and begin. Do more and talk less, and let your wittles stop your mouth," ordered Nancy, crabbedly dismissing him.

"And so, Nancy, no one has ever come to claim that poor child?" said Amy.

"Not a singly soul, ma'am. It's forsook, that's my opinion; it's forsook!" the woman replied, firmly.

"What on earth shall we do with it, Nancy?"

"Send it to the 'sylum, that's my opinion. Send it to the 'sylum."

"But, oh, those asylums! I don't know what they are in this neighborhood; but they are the purgatories of children where I came from," sighed Amy.

"Well, so they be here, and that's a fact. But, Lord, what can you do, Miss Amy? You can't s'port no fondlings. So you'll have to send it to the 'sylum. And it is a pity for it, too, poor little thing; for a quieter, sweeter, better little child never was born, and that's the sacred truth. And there's a heap o' diff'ence 'mong chil'en, and that I tell you good. Laws, why some on 'em is jes as cross and spiteful and wenomous as wasps; and they squalls from morning till night, and then brawls from night till morning. I knows 'em. Didn't I nuss the whole thirteen gals and boys, one arter another, for my first missus—and the very screamingist critturs that ever druv a poor nuss leaping mad? But this one is the werry patientest little angel as ever was, and it is a shame of its parients to go and forsake it, and a crying pity for it to be sent to the 'sylum. Some time, I 'spose, you'll have to do it, Miss Amy."

"Well, I will not do it yet a while, at least," said Amy. "It seems almost to break Owen's heart for me to talk of sending his pet away."

"Well there then, I said it. I never, no, I never *did* see any thing take to any thing else as that boy does to that baby. Why, he loves it as if it was his grandmother!" exclaimed Nancy.

"It is strange, too; for boys do not usually like babies: on the contrary, they generally very much dislike them. But, then, Owen is not like other boys; he has all his father's tenderness of pity for the helpless," said Amy, as the tears sprang to her eyes.

"There now, Miss Amy, don't you go to crying! You'll

jes' go heave yourself back into a fever again," expostulated Nancy.

"I won't give way, Nancy,—indeed I won't," said the poor young widow, wiping her eyes, and then taking up her cup of tea.

Whether Owen literally obeyed the old woman in the matter of devouring the whole supper or not, I am not prepared to say; if he did, he despatched a very large meal in a very short time, for he soon opened the door and re-entered his mother's room.

"Have you eat all up?" demanded Nancy.

"You'll see when you go down, Nancy," he answered, archly.

"Well, now, mind, if you hasn't, I gwine make you come down and finish, I tell you *good*," said the old woman, as she began to arrange the soiled tea-service on the tray to take it down stairs.

"Very well," smiled Owen.

"And now another thing. I gwine down to eat my supper and feed the baby. You may stay long of your ma until I come back, if so be you don't talk too much to disturb her. But when I *does* come back, you got to bid your ma good-night, and leave her to go to sleep. You hear that good, don't you?"

"Yes, Nancy, I hear," smiled Owen. "And 'to hear is to obey,' as the courtiers say to the sultans in the Arabian Nights."

"I don't know nufin 'bout no Raving Nights, nor Days; but I know you've got to mind what I say to you, young man," replied Nancy, as she left the room.

"Mother, dear," said Owen, producing the little order-slate from under his arm as he approached the bedside, "you know the old woman I told you about who came to take the baby away?"

"Yes, Owen—well?"

"Well, I promised to tell you about her, and to give

you her name and address, in case you *should* want a nurse for the baby, and now I give them to you because I promised her to do so, and not because I think you will let her have the baby."

"Well, Owen, let me hear it, dear."

"It is 'Mrs. Stone, near Prout's Point,' in this county," said the boy, reading off the address from the slate. "And it is but fair, mother, to tell you that she offered to take the baby for nothing, because her granddaughter wanted one in place of her lost child so badly. But still I do hope you will not let the poor little thing go."

"I don't know, Owen. The offer is worth considering, or it would be if it were not just a little suspicious. Why do you hope I will not let the baby go?"

"Just for a reason you have mentioned, mother dear. You say it looked suspicious. And *I* did not like the woman's looks at all! And besides, she offered to give me five dollars if I would let her take the baby away."

"*That* looks more suspicious still! Owen, are you sure that she was not a *lady?*" inquired Amy, as her thoughts reverted to the dark-robed gentlewoman in the mysterious house that had been described to her by her husband on the night before his murder.

"I don't know, mother; she was dressed like a poor woman, and she talked like an ignorant one."

"What was the color of her hair, Owen?"

"It was gray, mother."

"Oh, then she was not the same," murmured Amy.

"And she had such queer eyebrows to go along with gray hair! They were quite black."

"Ah!" cried Amy, rising on her elbow.

"And such singular eyes, mother! I hope it is no harm to say it, but—she reminded me of an old cat—*her eyes were so very green.*"

"It is the same!" exclaimed Amy, in great excitement.

"The same what, mother dear?" inquired Owen, in surprise.

"Never mind what now, my boy! I will tell you presently, perhaps. But now you tell me—what sort of a nose had this woman?"

"A sharp nose, mamma, a very sharp one!"

"And her lips?"

"They were thin and pinched up and sour-looking—as if she was one that wouldn't let any little boys have any apples off *her* trees; nor wouldn't allow the cat to lie on the hearth rug even in the winter time; nor permit the servant to go home and see her sick mother; nor do any thing good-natured."

"A selfish, cruel, ruthless woman; it *is* the same!"

"And oh, mother, there was another thing I forgot to tell you about——"

"What was that, dear?"

"Why, though she did dress so poorly and talk so badly, I noticed when she pulled off her glove that her hand was as white as milk, and her fingers were long and thin like a lady's."

"She *is* a lady, in rank at least, Owen!"

"A lady! Do you know her, mother dear?"

"I know *of* her; but know no good of her. She is the mortal enemy of that poor, helpless babe, and seeks her life, as Herod sought the lives of the innocents in Bethlehem."

"Oh mother!" cried little Owen in horror and amazement so great that he could utter no more.

"Oh! how wrong I am to tell my unsuspicious child such dreadful things as these!" exclaimed Amy, looking remorsefully at her little son.

"Oh no, no, no, dear mother, please don't say so! Who else *have* you to tell but me? Tell me all that is on your mind, dear mother, for I can bear to hear all that you can bear to tell! Tell me who that wicked woman is and why

she wishes to destroy this poor baby?" said Owen, earnestly.

"I do not know who she is, my dear; nor why she seeks the life of the child; I only know from what your dear father told me on the same day of his death, that she does so. Some day, my boy, I will tell you what it was your father told me. I will tell every thing I know, which is not much. I will keep no secrets from you, my boy, and you will keep none from me, I know. And we will be friends and confidantes, will we not, my little son?"

"Oh yes, yes, mother dear, we will."

The boy stooped and pressed a fervent kiss upon his mother's lips.

"And now I must not talk any more; and besides I hear old Nancy coming up, and she will be worried if she finds me excited," said Amy, with a smile, as she composed herself on her bed.

And, in fact, Nancy entered almost the same moment.

When the old woman had drawn a match and lighted the night taper, she came to the bed to examine her patient; and finding Amy nervous, agitated and feverish, she took her own method of soothing such sufferings; namely, by a vigorous scolding, impartially divided between the mother and the son.

"There now, if I jes' didn't know how it was a gwine to be atwixt you two! Marse Owen! didn't I tell you *good* how you wasn't to talk to your ma, hey?"

"It was I who talked to him, Nancy," said her mistress.

"Well there, Miss Amy, you ought to have more sense, I tell you good!" grumbled the old nurse, as she busied herself arranging the room, the patient and the baby for the night.

"Kiss me good-night, Owen, and go to bed!" said Amy, drawing the head of her little son down to her lips, and then dismissing him from the room.

But Owen did not go to bed at once. He went and shut

up the shop, and then he sat down by the cradle of the forsaken child and watched it, until old Nancy came down stairs to convey it up to Amy's room, where she herself was to sleep that night.

Then Owen went up to the little back attic that he had occupied since his mother's illness; and he knelt down and thanked God for his mother's recovery, and laid himself upon his little bed and fell into a peaceful sleep.

CHAPTER VIII.

INVESTIGATIONS.

A frank, bright boy, who has not learned
To quail at frown of man.—*Macaulay.*

DELICATE organizations, like that of Amy Wynne, are frequently very elastic, and they rebound quickly and easily from illness and depression. They are not strong, but they are active. So in less than a fortnight Amy left her bed, and though still confined to her room, she began to interest and engage herself with her small domestic affairs.

And first when she looked at her own pretty, healthy, thriving little girl, whom she loved so tenderly, she pitied the poor, little, friendless and forsaken babe, that had been cast upon her mercy for shelter. She sent for it to be brought to her room, and when she found it looking pale and thin and weak, as motherless children, fed by hand, too often do look, her kind heart melted towards it, and she took it to her own bosom, to share with her own child her nursing love.

As sure as we live there are some angels in this world.

Next she busied herself with a sad but needful task—the preparation of her mourning, without which she could not decently appear out of her chamber. Old Nancy was sent

over to "Lacy's" to procure samples and prices. When these were submitted to Amy, she selected the plainest and cheapest black fabrics that custom would permit her to wear, and she cut them out and made them up with her own hands.

Next she began to look into her accounts. To aid her in this task she called in her adjutant, little Owen.

"Do you know, my son," she asked, while stitching away at her own black dress—"do you know any thing about what we owe for your dear father's funeral and my own illness?"

"No, mother, dear. Neither Mr. Durkee nor Doctor Canning have sent in any bill yet," said the boy.

"I can ask the doctor for his bill when he leaves off attending me. But, my dear Owen, you must go at once and ask Mr. Durkee for *his* account, because I feel very anxious about that; and, my dear boy, *that* must be paid promptly, even if we go hungry."

"Yes, indeed, mother, dear," answered the boy earnestly.

"Then go at once and get it, my love; and while you are out, you had better also call at Lacy's, and at the shoemaker's, and grocer's, and butcher's, and get all their accounts, and bring them to me, so that we may be able to see how we stand with the world."

"Yes, mother," said Owen; and he picked up his hat and was off in an instant.

Owen was gone two hours, for he was obliged to traverse the village from one end to the other, and wait at each shop until each tradesman had made out his bill. At the end of the time mentioned he returned home, with his little hands filled with folded papers, like those of a collector.

"Here they are, mother, dear," he said, entering the widow's room; "but every man that gave me one said that you were not to worry *your*self, because he was in no hurry *him*self."

Amy stretched out her hand, and took the packet of bills;

but she looked at the black-edged one first, and then at the others in succession.

The array of figures was rather formidable to one of Amy's small means. The undertaker's bill was one hundred and fifty-five dollars and twenty-five cents; Lacy's, fifteen dollars and seventy-five cents; the shoemaker's, thirteen dollars; the grocer's, seventeen; the butcher's, nine.

Amy took pencil and paper and figured it all up.

"We owe two hundred and ten dollars, Owen!" she exclaimed, in dismay.

"Oh, mother, dear, what a heap of money!" cried the boy, opening his eyes wide in consternation.

"How much have you in the till?"

Owen reflected for a moment, and then answered:

"There is just twenty-nine dollars, and some few cents that I have not counted in yet."

"And besides that I have not got more than eleven dollars in the house, making about forty all together. Forty dollars to meet a debt of two hundred and ten! And, oh, Owen, we have not counted in the doctor's bill, nor the house-rent, nor the wood bill, nor Nancy's wages, nor the livery-stable bill for your poor father's hired horse. And all that will make as much more! Oh, Owen, we owe at least four hundred dollars, my boy; and how in the world shall we ever pay it!" exclaimed Amy in a panic, and instinctively appealing to her son; for poor Amy was constitutionally a *leaner*, and, having lost the strong arm upon which she had been accustomed to lean, she now turned towards this little son.

Owen, for his part, stared in blank dismay for the space of a minute; and then his face suddenly brightened and he answered, confidently:

"Mother dear, it *is* a great deal of money, and I do not know *how* we shall pay it; but I *do* know we *shall* pay it! You'll see!"

There was something so cheerful, so hopeful, so *assured*, in the boy's look, and tone, and manner that the poor mother was inspired with a new faith.

"Not desolate—not altogether desolate am I while you are with me, dear boy," she said.

As soon as Amy was able to dress and go down stairs and bear the excitement of the subject, she had an interview with the Reverend Mr. Morley, Doctor Canning, and Magistrate Allen, who called on her to obtain all the particulars she might be able to give them in aid of their search after the murderer of Doctor Wynne.

Amy felt now that the time had come for her lips to be unsealed; and so she frankly told her visitors all the facts that she knew, and all the possibilities she conjectured that were, or might have been, connected with her husband's death. She related the particulars of his summons forth at midnight in that memorable storm; his visit to the mysterious patient in the lonely house; his interview with the sinister woman whom he suspected of criminal designs against the life of the child that was born there that night, and that was afterwards committed to his care; of his second midnight visit to the same house, when he expected to receive a large sum of money for the support of the child, but from which he never returned.

So far Amy spoke of facts correctly.

But when she was questioned as to what sort of a house this was, and in what direction it lay from the village, she answered according to her best belief, but, of course, erroneously:

That it was a large and handsome house, standing in its own ornamented grounds, and situated some few miles north of the village.

Now the reader knows that the old house in the woods, so far from being a handsome one, standing in its own ornamented grounds, was a dilapidated and unsightly edifice in the midst of a totally-neglected thicket. And

instead of being situated north of the village, stood due south, across the Virginia lines.

But Amy had been naturally enough led into these mistakes by the statements of Dr. Wynne, who had himself been deceived—first, by the dumb driver, who took him from the village by the *north* road, making a circuit for the south; and then by the dark lady, who had brought him out of the deep midnight into a brilliant and gorgeous *interior* that naturally suggested a handsome *exterior*.

But Amy's description, so firmly believed by herself to be as correct as it was clear, utterly bewildered her auditors, who looked from one to the other in perplexity. There was positively no such house as the one she described in the whole neighborhood—except—yes!—oh! good gracious!

All eyes turned in wonder towards the magistrate, whose face grew scarlet, as well it might; for his own house—his grand, new house, of which he was so proud and vain—was positively the only one in the whole country that in the least degree answered the description, and it answered it to a nicety. It was a magnificently-built, and elegantly-furnished mansion, beautifully situated in its own ornamented grounds, and about three miles north of the village.

No wonder that perplexity grew into consternation on the part of the spectators, or that surprise arose to anger on that of the magistrate, who presently found his tongue, and complained bitterly:

"Upon my soul, gentlemen both, I really think it very odd that you should turn and gaze upon me in the way you do, as if you expected *me* to own the child, or the murder, or both perhaps! It is true that my country-seat does rather closely resemble the house described by the lady as the one visited that night by the late Doctor Wynne; and perhaps it is the only house in the country that does so; but I hope, sirs and madam, that no one here, or elsewhere, imagines that *my* household is, or ever could be, connected with any disreputable family secret!"

"Oh, no, no, no, no, Mr. Allen! Certainly not! Assuredly not!" hastily exclaimed Amy, in dismay.

"Quite impossible, of course," admitted Parson Morley.

"You see we were only astonished and thrown off our guard by the description suiting your house so accurately; but, of course, not one of us could for a moment have imagined it to be the one described as containing a family mystery," explained Doctor Canning.

And in truth it would have required a bold imagination to have conceived of any family mystery in the well-regulated household of the magistrate, consisting only of himself, a staid bachelor of sixty years and of good repute in church and state, and his two sisters, maiden ladies of still riper age and sterner piety.

"But since it is quite out of the question that it should have been Mr. Allen's house, whose house *could* it have been? I am, comparatively speaking, a stranger in your neighborhood, gentlemen, and I must look to you for assistance in identifying the house and elucidating this mystery," said Amy, appealing to her visitors.

"Aye, indeed! what house could it have been?" inquired the magistrate.

But the parson and the doctor shook their heads, without however being able to shake any suggestion out of them.

Conjecture was at fault, as of course it must have been, when they were looking in a diametrically opposite direction to the true one, for a house entirely different from the real one!

Finally the council broke up, without the members having come to any satisfactory conclusion.

And though in the course of the next few weeks every possible investigation was set on foot, and advertisements were put in the local papers—some offering large rewards for the apprehension of the murderers of Doctor Hugh Wynne, still supposed to be the runaway negroes, and others calling upon the friends of the forsaken babe, left with Mrs. Wynne, to come forward and claim it—nothing whatever was discovered.

CHAPTER IX.

WAYS AND MEANS.

Gars the auld claithes "sell"
Amaist as weel as the new.—*Burns.*

MEANTIME the summer was fading into autumn. As the days grew short and the nights chill, Amy and her little son put their heads together to devise ways and means to pay their debts and to provide for the coming winter.

They had but forty dollars to meet debts whose whole amount was four hundred.

"This sum will be nothing, Owen dear, divided among so many creditors; and therefore, as the most sacred debt we owe is that for your dear father's funeral—" Here the poor young widow stopped and wept a little, and then wiped her eyes and continued—"You must carry all this money over to the undertaker, and ask him to credit us with it, and tell him that as soon as I can I will pay him the balance. Ah! what a great balance! over a hundred dollars!" she sighed, as she put her purse in her little son's hand.

Owen took it directly to Mr. Durkee; and soon returned with a receipt for the money.

The next thing to be thought of was retrenchment. But oh! in what possible way could *they*, so frugal in all their habits, retrench at all? In only one.

"We can discharge Nancy, Owen dear. And indeed we ought not to keep a servant while we cannot pay our debts," said Amy.

"Oh, mother! that will be so hard on you," said the boy, sorrowfully. "But no! it shall not be either. For *I* will do Nancy's work; and even if there is any part of it that I don't know how to do yet, why I can soon learn," he added, cheerfully.

"My own, dear boy, I know that you will be a great

help as well as a great comfort to me," said Amy, embracing her son.

"But, mother dear, we must pay Nancy before we send her away," suggested the boy.

"Yes, yes, I have thought of that; and thought of how to do it too. I have a good lot of colored clothes that I shall never wear again—for I shall never, never leave off mourning for my dear, dear husband—and I know I can sell these ready-made dresses to the negro women hereabouts for half that they could buy the mere material for anywhere else; and yet for enough to pay Nancy her wages and pay Lacy his bill for our black also. And by the way, I must ask Nancy to speak to her acquaintances and let them know that I have these things to sell."

"That will be the very best way, mother dear," agreed Owen.

The same day Nancy was called in and informed of the plan. And before the end of the week, Amy's house was thronged with colored people, anxious to overhaul her wardrobe and get bargains out of her left-off clothing.

Nancy presided over the sales to see that justice was done—not to her own friends—but to her mistress; and so she got better prices than the generous Amy would ever have asked.

A white cambric robe and a pink lawn dress, both being considered of material suitable for infants' wear, were taken out and laid aside to be cut up for clothing for the two babies.

And after the dresses were all disposed of, there was a summer mantle and a winter cloak, and a thin and a thick shawl, and a best and a second-best bonnet, and a small assortment of collars and under sleeves, ribbons and laces, to be examined and purchased. And here again Nancy interfered and said that she would buy them all herself—*that* she would!—sooner than they should go for "sich prices as them niggards offered."

Now poor Nancy did not possess more than twenty dollars in the world; but nevertheless her threat took effect and she obtained the price *she* set, which was very near the full value of the goods.

At last when every thing was sold, and the purchasers went away, convinced by the eloquence of Nancy, as well as by their own private experience, that they had made excellent bargains, the old woman restored the closets and boxes to order again and went down to report to her mistress; whom she found seated in the back parlor—with her hands engaged in making up a Sunday suit of mourning for her son: and her foot on the rocker of the cradle in which the two infants lay slumbering side by side.

With honest exultation old Nancy knelt down upon the floor beside her mistress and began to count into her lap her gains.

"Here, Miss Amy, honey, here's the money; now let's see if it's all right. Here's a ten-dollar note—that's *ten;* and here's a five, that's fifteen; and here's five more, that's twenty; and ten more, that's thirty; and ten more again, that's forty; and five more, that's forty-five—"

"Oh! Nancy, that's a great deal more money than I expected!" exclaimed Amy, in such delight that her voice reached the ears of her little son, who was standing behind the counter in the shop; so that he ran in and knelt down beside his mother to see what was going on that had given her so much pleasure.

"Oh, Owen dear! we have got forty-five dollars, and now we can make another payment on your dear father's—" Amy's voice was suddenly choked by emotion and her eyes filled with tears; but she wiped them away as Nancy exclaimed:

"There now, honey, stop a bit and listen to me. I said forty-five, didn't I?"

"Yes, Nancy."

"All right; that is what I got from Betsy Piper for the

dove-colored silk and the Parsley shawl and the black welwet bonnet. And now look here," she said, taking from her bosom a miscellaneous heap of notes, and gold and silver. "Now let's count—you've got forty-five dollars there already. Now here's five more, that's fifty; and here's a twenty dollar note, that's—that's—bother my head! How much is that, Marse Owen?"

"That's seventy dollars, Nancy."

"Well, you are a scholar at your figures, and that's sartain! And I should not wonder a singly bit if you was to 'rive at the extinction of keeping 'counts for some rich merchant, some of these days!"

"Why, Nancy, I mean to be a rich merchant myself one of these days; and to have great warehouses full of goods, and long wharves piled up with merchandise, and big ships on the ocean fetching and carrying every thing—every thing that is wanted everywhere!" exclaimed the boy confidently, with his eyes beaming, as if he saw through and beyond the "ignorant present" into the "all hail, hereafter."

"Oh, Owen, Owen, my son, you must not think too much of this uncertain world! Think how few of our hopes are ever realized, my dear! Oh! think of your poor father! How noble and high-souled and aspiring he was! and how he was cut off in his prime!" said Doctor Wynne's sad widow.

"I know it all, mother dear. And I know if the Lord pleases to cut *me* off, it will be right, because all that he does must always be right. But still, *if the Lord will*, I mean to be a rich merchant, with warehouses and wharves and ships, as I said; and with a town-house and a country-seat; and carriages, and horses, and dogs! And mind, mother dear, I don't want all these things for *myself* neither, because very little would satisfy *me;* but I want them for other people—first of all for *you*, mother dear; and for both little sisters; and then for the poor—espe-

cially the widows and orphans; and then for all the rest of the world."

"My poor little knight-errant, you are thinking of Whittington and his cat, and expecting some day to be made Lord Mayor of London perhaps," smiled Amy.

"No, mother; I don't believe in Whittington, who owed all his fortune to a *cat* and an *accident*. And I don't expect any cat or any accident to make my fortune. But mind you, I *do* believe in John Stevenson, the great London banker, who was a poor almshouse boy; but who lived to make a great fortune and to build almshouses himself! And I believe in Stephen Girard, the great American merchant-prince, who arrived in Philadelphia on foot, with his clothes tied up in a pocket handkerchief, and without a friend in the world, or a dollar in his pocket, but who also lived to make an enormous fortune, and to found a college for poor boys. And I too mean—*if the Lord will*—to make a great deal of money and do a great deal of good in this world! *You'll* see, mother; and *you'll* see, too, Nancy!" said the boy, nodding his head confidently.

"Lord send I may, child; for I shall live to a good old age if I do; and that's sartin," said the old woman—"But now don't bother my head any more, 'cause I want to count out the rest of this money and it is all in small change."

"Suppose you let me help you, Nancy," suggested Owen.

"There then,"—replied the old woman, pouring the coin into the doubled hands of the boy.

He took it and carefully counted out into his mother's hands, in half dollars and quarters, the sum of fifteen dollars.

"And how much do that make, put along of the rest altogether?" asked Nancy.

"Eighty-five dollars, Nancy," Owen replied.

"There, Miss Amy, you've got eighty-five dollars for your things!" said the old woman, with glee.

"Oh, how much money! I shall be able now to pay everybody something on account!—But oh, Nancy!" exclaimed Amy, with a sudden revulsion of feeling, "I am very much afraid that you let the poor people, in their liberality, pay a great deal too much for the things!"

"Their liberality!!!—Miss Amy, I just wish you see how liberal they was! Why they was so liberal they would a bought the whole lot for one dollar if I'd a let them have it!"

"Still I'm afraid you made them pay too much!"

"No, I didn't, Miss Amy. Instance: Betsy Piper, she was the biggest buyer; 'cause why, why 'cause she was the best able; her husband, Bill Piper, being of chief cook on the Baltimore steamer, and getting of wagers higher nor our minister's salary hisself; and having of not a chick nor a child to support in this world, 'cept 'tis his wife Betsy. And so she come with her pocket full of money, proud as a pea-hen, and wanted to buy all the best things, and *did* buy 'em, at just whally, too! Instance: how much did *you* pay for that rich Parsley shawl with the crimson centre, Miss Amy?"

"Thirty-five dollars, in New York, Nancy."

"Thirty-five dollars in York? Well, and it is as good as bran new; and you couldn't buy the likes of it here at Lacy's for less 'an forty; and I sold it to that there Jezebel for thirty! And the dove-colored silk dress, Miss Amy?"

"I made it up myself; the material cost me fifteen dollars."

"And I sold it for ten. And the black velvet bonnet, Miss Amy?"

"I made that also, Nancy; the material cost me six dollars."

"And I sold it for five! So you see, Miss Amy, honey,

she got about sixty or seventy dollars worth of things, including the making on 'em, for forty-five dollars, which is about half price. Was that too much to ax her?"

"No; I think you were right, Nancy."

"Well; and I sold every thing else in the same 'portion, getting werry nearly the full wally on 'em, but not quite. And now, Miss Amy, I want to ax you another thing: how much you pay in York for that ere gray cloth cloak o' yourn?"

"Twenty dollars, Nancy."

"Well, then, that is just exactly what I thought it was worth; and what I made it fetch."

"It was a favorite with my poor husband, Nancy. I hope some good creature bought it. Who did?"

"No werry good creetur', Miss Amy, but a old sinner—which, not to deceive you, it were myself."

"Oh, Nancy, Nancy, dear! if it was you that bought the cloak, I can never let you pay me for it. You must accept it as a present from me," said Amy.

"Who? *me*—ME rob the widow and the orphan of twenty dollars' worth of goods? I'd see the widow and the orphan everlastingly——*blest*, first! I'm blest if I wouldn't. I beg your pardon for swearing, Miss Amy, but it were enough to make a saint swear, let alone a old sinner. And the end of which is, if you don't keep the money, I don't take the cloak."

"Very well, Nancy—just as you please. Nothing remains then for me but to thank you, Nancy, and to pay you your wages, and—part with you; part with you most unwillingly, for you have been a valuable friend as well as good servant," said Amy, with the ready tears rising in her eyes.

"Part! what's that for? I ain't a gwine to part, and I tell you so *honest*. I ain't a gwine for to part, 'cause if you knows as how you's got a good sarvent, which you 'pears for to know, I knows as how I've got a good missus

and a comfortable home, which I don't mean to leave in a hurry."

"Oh, Nancy, dear, if I were able to keep you, I would never part with you!"

"Is you able to *lose* me? that's what I want to know."

"Not very well, indeed, Nancy. But, you see, while I am so much in debt, I cannot afford to keep a servant."

"With your little strength, can you afford to do without one? Tell me that."

"I don't know, Nancy; but what I *do* know is that I cannot pay the wages."

"And who de debbil—begging of your pardon, Miss Amy—axed you for any wages? *I* didn't, that's sartin. I thank my heavenly Marster as I've got clothes enough to last me ten year, if so be I never buy another stitch! And I reckon you can *afford* to give me wittles enough to eat, and a place to heave my tired bones down on at night. I s'pose you's able to do *that* much. And that's all I axes; leastways for the present. Arter a while, maybe, if I lives long enough, when Marse Owen gets to be a great, rich merchant, with warehouses, and ships, and town-mansions, and country-seats, he can pay me," said Nancy, with a touch of dry humor and caustic irony.

Not so, however, did Owen receive the suggestion. He answered it in all sincerity:

"That I will, Nancy. I will pay you both principal and interest, and compound interest at that. And oh! I say, Nancy, you shall be the housekeeper at the town-mansion, or the country-seat, just as you please. And you shall wear a black silk gown, and a lace cap every day of your life, and have nothing to do but to carry the keys and to scold the maids! And that would suit you exactly, Nancy."

"Yes, honey—thank you kindly—so it will! I thinks I sees myself in a black silk gown and a lace cap, a-carry-

ing of the keys and a-ordering of the maids!" said the old woman, rising and putting her arms akimbo.

At this moment the ringing of the shop bell announced a customer, whom Owen flew to attend.

And then the old woman turned to leave the room, declaring that it was time to put her muffins to rise for tea.

But her mistress stopped her, saying:

"See here, Nancy, my good woman; you and I must come to an understanding. As to my poor boy's brilliant dreams, they are not likely to be realized in *your* lifetime, or even in *mine*. So if you insist on stopping with us for the present, you must accept that gray cloak as a free gift. On no other terms, Nancy, will I consent. And this is final."

"Werry well. If I must, I must. Werry well."

CHAPTER X.

THE LITTLE HOUSEHOLD.

——Light and busy feet astir
In the small housewifery, the busiest bees
That ever wrought in hive.—*Milford.*

The next day being the first Sunday in October, and communion day, Amy, for the first time since her awful bereavement, made an effort to attend divine service.

So, soon as their frugal breakfast of rye coffee, corn bread, and salt herring was over, Amy put Owen into his new suit of black, dressed herself in her widow's weeds, drew the long crape veil over her face, and, leaving the house and the infants in the care of old Nancy, set out with her little son to walk to church.

It was a glorious autumn morning, and the village street was at once calm with the Sabbath stillness and bright with

the throngs of country-people in their gaudy Sunday dresses.

The sad-eyed young widow looked languidly through the folds of her black veil at those her happy fellow-pedestrians. And once she almost unconsciously smiled at a procession that she saw passing up on the opposite side of the street.

It was a procession of her own left-off colored finery on the backs of the darkies.

And very conspicuous among lesser glories was Mrs. Betsy Piper, the steamboat cook's prosperous wife—a stout personage, who waddled along looking very conscious of being very fine in Amy's little black velvet bonnet that was too small for her big head, and Amy's crimson-centred Paisley shawl that glowed like fire in the morning sun on her broad shoulders.

Reproaching herself for the involuntary smile that had hovered for an instant over her sorrowful, pale lips, Amy drew her crape veil more closely over her face and walked pensively on up the street. The church, you remember, was on the same side of the way with Amy's house, but built at the upper extremity of the street.

It was a small Gothic edifice of gray rock, and stood in the midst of a large church-yard that was thickly shaded with evergreen trees and closely crowded with white grave stones.

It was yet early when the young widow passed the open gates that invited entrance to the sanctuary. So, closing her fingers convulsively upon her little son's hand, she drew him down a large bye-path leading to an obscure nook in the southwest corner of the yard, where in summer the shade was always deepest and in winter the sunshine was always brightest, and here she paused beside a lonely grave without a head-stone.

A few moments she stood calm and self-possessed, clasping the hand of her little son and gazing down upon her husband's last resting-place; but then her fortitude sud-

denly gave way, and she sank, sobbing, down upon the mound.

After a little while Owen knelt beside her, put his little arms around her neck and his soft lips to hers and caressed her in silence. Her grief was too sacred and his sympathy too reverent for many words.

The church bell began to toll, calling in the people to prayer. But still Amy cowered and wept upon the grave, and still Owen knelt there and comforted her.

The church bell had tolled some time and the mourners were still in the same position, when the young widow felt a hand laid kindly on her bowed shoulders, and heard a voice speak gravely in her ear:

"Why seek ye the living among the dead? Go thy way hence. It is *well* with thy husband."

Amy looked up through her tears and saw bending over her, with looks of the deepest compassion, a young man in the dress of a clergyman.

He had apparently entered the church-yard by a side gate leading from the parsonage that stood on that side of the church.

With a grave, sweet courtesy, he extended his hand and raised the mourner from her prostrate posture, and pointed the way towards the church and passed on.

Amy took the hand of her little son and followed.

But the young clergyman took the way to the back door that led through the vestry room into the chancel, while Amy and her son passed on to the front door, through which the congregation was now pouring into the body of the church.

"Who is he, mother dear?" whispered Owen.

"I don't know, darling; probably Mr. Eveson, the young curate who has been engaged to assist Mr. Morley," replied his mother, in a low voice, as they reverently passed into the centre aisle.

When they had reached their pew and seated themselves,

they bowed their heads in private prayer, and remained thus while the organ pealed forth the opening "voluntary," and until the music ceased and the voice of the minister arose reading the impressive exhortation:

"The Lord is in His holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him."

These soul-subduing words rebuked that tumultuous earthly grief which was rending the widow's bosom and ready to burst forth at any moment; and she grew still with the reverential stillness of one who felt herself in the invisible, awful presence of the Most High.

The prayers that followed comforted her soul; and the hymn that came next cheered her heart, as it well might. Listen:

"Give to the winds thy fears,
Hope, and be undismayed,
God hears thy sighs and sees thy tears,
God shall lift up thy head.

"Through clouds and storms and waves,
He gently clears thy way;
Trust thou his love, so shall the night
Soon end in glorious day."

And so on through five stanzas, equally consoling.

In this old-fashioned country church, not the choir only, but the whole congregation sang the hymns. Amy joined in the singing. She had a sweet, low, thrilling voice, and the trembling of her tones did but give depth to its pathos.

The sermon for the day was a message of Divine love for the mourner. It was preached from the following text:

"Fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God."

It spoke first of the infinite *love* of the Father for his children; secondly, of his infinite *wisdom* in allotting to each one the life-discipline that shall ultimately prove the

best for the welfare of his or her soul; and, thirdly, of his infinite *power* to comfort and save to the uttermost.

Amy and her little son were most attentive, absorbed and reverential listeners to this discourse. They seldom removed their eyes from the face of the preacher. And when they did, it was only to seek each other's eyes for sympathy. The thought in Amy's mind being—"Does my little son understand all that he hears?" while the mental question with Owen was—"Is mother consoled by all this?"

Had they put their questions in the form of words, they might have been answered satisfactorily. For Owen not only clearly understood, but deeply felt the divine beauty and power of that sermon. And Amy was not only much consoled, but greatly strengthened by it; so that, at its close, her voice did not falter in the least degree, but was as firm and even as it was sweet and clear, when she joined the congregation in singing the following hymn:

"How firm a foundation, ye children of God,
Is laid for your faith in his excellent word!
What more can he say, than to you he hath said,
You who unto Jesus for refuge have fled,

"Fear not, I am with thee, oh, be not dismayed,
I, I am thy God, and will still give thee aid;
I will strengthen thee, help thee, and cause thee to stand,
Upheld by my righteous, omnipotent hand."

The services of the morning concluded with the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. After which, the congregation prepared to disperse.

In leaving the church Amy became, for the first time, aware of the deep interest that was felt by her neighbors for her and her fatherless children.

First, old Mr. Morley, who had not assisted in conducting the worship this morning, but had remained quietly in his private pew during the whole of the services, came forward, with his wife, to shake hands with Amy and Owen;

and to express his pleasure at seeing them once more at church.

Amy thanked him on the part of herself and her son.

And while they stood conversing, the old pastor beckoned the young preacher of the day to approach them; and when he drew near, introduced him to Amy as the Rev. Ernest Eveson, his new assistant.

The young preacher bowed low, and when he raised his head again, Amy said to him:

"I am pleased to know you, Mr. Eveson, and to be able to tell you how much I thank you for your sermon of to-day. It has revived my nearly sinking faith and hope."

Again the young preacher bowed low, as he answered modestly:

"If my words have carried one thought of comfort to one mourner here, I am amply rewarded." And smiling with a pensive brightness, he passed on.

The old pastor and his wife then shook hands with Amy and Owen, and followed their clerical brother.

And the mother and son walked slowly from the church.

As soon as the young widow and her fatherless boy appeared in the church-yard, they found themselves surrounded by a crowd.

Country people are very sympathetic; and so, all who had the least excuse of the slightest acquaintance with Amy, or the late Doctor Wynne, or even with little Owen, came thronging around the mother and son with looks and words of the sincerest sympathy and respect, and with proffers of the friendliest services.

Some entreated her to be of good cheer; others invited her out to tea; and others again, who had come to church in their little carriages, and in going home would pass her door, pressed her and her son to take seats with them.

Amy, with the grave, sweet courtesy that was habitual to her, thanked her neighbors for their kindness, but declined their offers.

And taking the hand of Owen, she walked on towards her own home.

"Owen, dear," she said, as they passed hand in hand down the street, "I feel happier to-day than I have felt since your dear father left us for the better world. For now, for the first time, I feel that he still lives; that he lives now more than he ever lived before; that, though we cannot see him, nor hear him, nor touch him, yet he is still near us, loving us, caring for us, and watching over us. Owen, love, I always steadfastly *believed* all the sacred truths taught us by our Christian religion; but I never deeply realized them until to-day," she concluded, dropping her voice to a reverential whisper.

Owen hugged her hand; that was the only way in which he could express his sympathy, or reply to such thoughts.

And thus they reached their own house.

They found "both little sisters," as Owen called the babies, still sleeping in the cradle where Amy had laid them before she went to church.

And they found their frugal dinner of mutton chops and mashed potatoes, with rice pudding, ready to go on the table.

So as soon as Amy had laid off her bonnet and mantle, she and her son sat down at the board.

Nancy waited on them. And as she handed about the dishes she gossiped according to her custom.

"Miss Amy, honey, did you notice them there Jenny-donkeys a-going by to church this morning all tricked off in your finery? Law! why, there was Polly Bell in your white crape shawl and white lace bonnet—jes as if it was the middle of the summer. And there was that Piper woman in your thick Parsley shawl and welwet bonnet, as if it was the dead o' winter. July and Janivery walking side by side in the month of October. But, I 'clares to the law, them niggers don't care how onreasonable they dresses so they's fine. And it's my opinion as they don't go to

church for nothing else but to show their clothes. I scorns sich. And talking about church, Miss Amy, I think it is my Christian duty to go, once a day at least, on Sunday; and so, if you don't want me this arternoon, I'd like to go. And I gwine to wear my new gray cloth cloak. It will look beautiful 'long o' my brown stuff gown and brown silk bonnet."

"I shall not want you, Nancy," said her mistress, smiling at the self-deception of the unconscious old woman, who was betraying the very weakness in herself that she had so severely blamed in others.

The Sabbath closed very peacefully in the young widow's little household.

On Monday morning, after the breakfast-service had been cleared away, and while Nancy was busy in the kitchen sorting out her week's washing, Amy called her little son in from the shop, and, with his assistance, counted out her money and divided it in portions to be distributed among her creditors.

First there were forty dollars, nearly half of the whole sum, put away for the undertaker.

"His is the most sacred debt we owe, you know, Owen dear," repeated the young widow, for the twentieth time, as her little son looked up in surprise at this unequal division.

Then the remainder was just apportioned between the rest of the creditors; and each man's money was rolled up in a separate piece of paper with his name written on it. And all the little parcels were given into the charge of Owen, with directions to go around the village and deliver them to their owners.

When Owen was gone, Amy took her seat on the low sewing-chair beside the cradle where slept the two infants, placed her foot upon the rocker, drew a large work-basket near her, and began to rock and sew, as was her daily custom.

Could the husband, whom, in her fond faith, she believed to be watching over her, have breathed a caution into her ear, it would have been to leave the sleeping children and the sewing-chair, for a quarter of an hour at least, and take a short walk this bright autumn morning to gather a little strength to fit her for the struggle that was before her.

If such a whisper was breathed by her spirit-guardian into *her* spirit, it was misunderstood, or disregarded; for though Amy dimly felt that she ought to go out into the fresh air, while the children's sleep gave her the opportunity, she considered the feeling only a temptation to idleness, and she resisted it, and sat there bending over her needle-work, until she got the old cramping pain in her chest and the old hectic flush on her cheeks.

And thus, at the end of three hours, Owen, returning from his errand, found her. He came in cheerfully, and as she raised her head he exclaimed:

"Why how pretty you look, mother dear! Your cheeks are as red as roses and your eyes so bright! You are getting well sure enough now, ain't you?" he inquired—for what did he, poor boy, know of that fire of death that looks so much like the bloom of health?

"It is the excitement of my work, Owen love; you see I am cutting up my white cambric wrapper into slips for these two little ones. They are badly in want of slips, and I can get them three a-piece out of this wrapper. Dear me, Owen, I find myself telling you all my little womanly contrivances just as if you were another woman and could understand them! But I have no one else but you to talk to, dear. You are son and daughter, sister and brother, bosom friend and all—all—to me, my darling!" said Amy, earnestly.

"I do wish to be, mother dear; I wish to be more and more to you, every year I live. Oh, I do pray the Lord to make me good, and wise, and strong, as he made little

Samuel; for your sake, mother dear. And now it is so beautiful out of doors; so beautiful it makes one's heart swell with praise only to walk in the sunshine. Now won't you put on your bonnet and go for a walk, while I watch the little sisters?" he coaxed.

"No, dear, not to-day. I want to finish a couple of these little slips at least before night; so that Nancy can do them up early to-morrow. But now tell me about the creditors. Were they satisfied with what you gave them?"

"Oh, yes, mother—that they were! And they were all as good as pie over it. They said that I was an honest boy and that you were very prompt with your payments."

"And what did the undertaker say?"

"Oh, mother dear, he was best of all. He said, 'Tell your mother I am very much obliged to her, but that I am afraid she robs herself; and that she need not pay me any more money until it is perfectly convenient. And if she never pays me the balance, I will never ask her for it.'"

"He is very, very good, and I thank him much. But the idea of my never paying him the balance! As if I would leave my dear, dear, darling Hugh in debt for his very grave! And then I wonder what made him think, or how he knew that it would be hard for me to pay?"

"I—reckon—he—guessed it, mother dear," said Owen, thoughtfully.

"*I* tell you how he knowed," said Nancy, putting in her head from the kitchen. "He seen them there Jezebels a-streaming to church yesterday, dressed out in all your finery. Think he didn't know it was yourn? Law! why Parsley shawls and welwet bonnets ain't so common in this here willage as not to be known again when they're wored."

"But I have never worn that winter bonnet and shawl since I have been here. We came, you know, in the beginning of the summer."

"Well, but anyways you wore that white crape shawl, and white lace bonnet, and blue lawn dress often enough.

And Marse Durkee he seen 'em on that flaunting huzzy, Polly Bell, and he knowed 'em again, and knowed the rest too; and so this morning he put this and that together, and found out where the money come from; and consequence saw how hard it would be for you to pay."

"May be so, Nancy."

"I know so, honey. Lor', chile, men ain't fools! I don't say as they've got as much sense as us wimmin, 'cause the land knows they hain't; or as they could take care of theirselves without us, which they knows they couldn't. But still they ain't downright discouraging, hopeless fools, even when their left to theirselves," said Nancy.

And what more she might have added on the same subject was cut short by the sudden boiling over of the wash-pot in the kitchen, raising a cloud of steam and light ashes from the kitchen fire; so that the old woman made a precipitate retreat to put a stop to the mischief.

The ringing of the shop-bell summoned Owen into the surgery to wait upon a customer.

And lastly, the waking up of the babies, who were very hungry, compelled Amy to lay aside her needle-work and take them into her lap.

And so the little household separated temporarily about their several businesses, to meet again, when the day's work should be done, at their frugal tea-dinner. For by a new, economical arrangement they had agreed to have but two meals a day—one in the morning at eight o'clock, and one in the afternoon at four.

CHAPTER XI.

THE MOTHER AND SON.

By that hidden way
My guide and I did enter to return
To the fair world and heedless of repose
We climbed, he first, I following his steps,
Till on our view the beautiful lights of Heaven
Dawned through a circular opening in the cave,
Whence issuing we again beheld the stars.—*Dante.*

Amy was heavily burdened with care; and looked forward with dread to the approaching winter. While the villagers were very busy in making up their winter clothing, Amy got some plain-sewing to do, for which she received a very small price. With this work, as long as it lasted, she filled up all her leisure time.

Owen minded the shop, and read medical books while waiting for customers in business hours. And in the evening, after the house was closed, he studied his school-books.

Nancy worked out the price of her gray cloth cloak, by doing the cooking and washing for the small household.

As the winter came on their family expenses were reduced to the smallest scale.

They kept but one fire all day; and that was in the little air-tight parlor cooking-stove that was set up in Amy's little room behind the shop. At night, one candle set upon the table in the middle of the room served mistress, maid and children. Their bill of fare was based upon the severest regimen that might keep body and soul together. Bread and tea for Amy; bread and molasses for Owen; and all these, together with an occasional bit of meat, because her work was hardest, for Nancy. Sometimes these articles of food were varied, and there would be coffee and corn bread for the mother; mush and milk for the son; and all these, with an occasional bit of fish, for the servant.

But notwithstanding all their efforts, they grew poorer and poorer. Work as they would they could not pay their debts. Deny themselves as they might, they were forced, in order to live, to ask for more credit.

The reasons were partly these: The autumnal accession of needle-work in the village being over, Amy got little sewing to do. And Owen's customers of the shop gradually fell off. The truth is that people began to find out that the medicine in the doctor's shop was *dispensed by* a mere boy; and they resolved to *dispense with* the use of it. They naturally but most unjustly distrusted Owen; and they prayed for the advent of some other practitioner to succeed the late Doctor Wynne. So the business of the shop fell at last to the mere sale of articles from the little show-case of fancy goods, such as perfumery, combs, brushes, et cetera, that stood upon the counter. And even this steadily diminished; for the stock was getting very low and there was no money to renew it. And besides, Mr. Lacy, the dry goods merchant, had a very large and handsome show-case filled with the very same articles on his counter. And people preferred to choose from a large assortment and to buy from him.

Thus you see even by the united efforts of the young mother and the little son, they made scarcely enough money to pay for house-rent and fuel. For food they had to run in debt.

Poor Amy! She was overpowered by a sense of humiliation and almost of dishonesty. She was profoundly ashamed of her debts and excessively afraid of her creditors—especially of Durkee, the undertaker, Lacy, the draper, and Spicer, the grocer. These three were her creditors of the longest standing and for the largest amount. Poor Amy was positively afraid and ashamed to look these men in the face. She felt such a dread of these creditors that she kept within doors to avoid meeting them. And when she was obliged to go out, she always shunned the side of

the streets they lived on. Or, if absolutely compelled to pass their houses, she hung her head and hurried along, in a blaze of mortification, with the feeling that "Rogues' Harbor" was a very proper name for the village that sheltered *her*, and that she was the very "rogue" from which the "harbor" had been named.

And yet creditors never troubled her. In a little village everybody knows every thing about everybody else. And of course these men knew all about Mrs. Wynne's awful bereavement, and the deep misfortunes into which it had plunged her. And the very least of their thoughts was to add one feather's weight to the burdens that were already oppressing her. They knew that they might never be paid. And if not they would certainly never persecute her. Meanwhile they would give her a plenty of time and not trouble her with bills. And at the same time that she would hurry past their doors with downcast eyes and burning cheeks hidden under her black crape veil, *their* only feeling towards her was one of the deepest compassion. Of course each man of them would rather have been paid than not; but that was not the point. The point was that whether they ever got their money from her or not, they would never dun that poor little suffering woman.

Meanwhile Amy did not know this, and she lived in the constant fear of duns.

Her greatest dread of all was Mr. Spicer the grocer. For she was not only unable to pay her debt to him, but she was obliged—to keep her body and soul together—she was obliged steadily to increase it.

She laid in her small family provisions every week in very small retail quantities. Every Monday morning Amy wrote her modest little order, if such a pitiable, deprecatory little note could be called an order:

"Mr. Spicer—*Dear Sir*:—Will you please to let me have a half a peck of flour, a quarter of a pound of tea, a quart of molas-

ses and a pound of candles, and charge them to my account; and indeed I will pay you as soon as ever I can.

"Yours respectfully, AMY WYNNE."

And every Monday morning, Owen, with his little cloak over his shoulders and his big basket on his arm, took this note and started for the grocery store, which was about a mile off, at the other end of the village.

And Amy sat over her small fire waiting, half in compunction for having sent the order at all; and half in anxiety lest it should not be filled.

But Owen always came home with a smiling face and a full basket. And then Amy would exclaim:

"Oh! my love! I am so glad you have brought the things. I was so much afraid he would not send them. Did he say any thing about the bill, Owen?"

"Oh no, mother dear; not a single word."

"Did he look cross, Owen, when you gave him the order?"

"Oh no, mother dear; he looked pleasant."

"He is very good! but I am afraid we shall wear out his patience at last," said Amy, with a sigh, as she took up the basket to put away the provisions; and felt that with this food in the house, she and her little family had one more week's reprieve from starvation.

These and similar conversations took place between the mother and the son every Monday evening after the bringing of the basket home.

Yet, as the winter advanced, deeper and deeper the little family sank into poverty and privation.

Amy got no more work at all. All the winter's sewing for the village housekeepers seemed to be quite finished.

And Owen got no more customers. People would not buy their medicines of him. And the fancy articles were all sold. There was nothing at all left. The little show case was quite empty. Owen tried in vain to get employ-

ment. But in a country where all the labor was performed by slaves, it was nearly impossible for a poor white man or boy to get work.

Their money gave out. There was none left to buy fuel, or to pay the current quarter's rent.

"And now," said Amy, despondently, "it only remains for Mr. Spicer to refuse to trust me any longer, and then we shall starve."

"Oh, no, mother dear; not at all. People don't starve now-a-days. I never heard of anybody starving in *my* life; and I know they don't do it," replied Owen, nodding his head and speaking confidently, as if from an extremely long experience of men and manners. "Besides," he added, "Mr. Spicer ain't a-going to refuse to trust us. He knows better. And he knows, if you can't pay him, I will. I have told him as much. And he believes me, too. For he looked very good-natured over it. And he said—'All right, my boy. How is your mother and the young uns?' Now, mother, don't you be afraid of Mr. Spicer. He ain't afraid of *you*, and that I can tell you. He's as good as pie always."

And this was strictly true. And the secret was simply this: Amy's modest little account for a dollar's worth of groceries every week was really not ruining the good-natured and well-to-do grocer. He very willingly filled her little order each week, without ever expecting to get a cent of pay, and without caring a pin whether he did or not.

But Amy did not know all this, and so she sighed as she answered her little son:

"He *is* very good, Owen, love; very good. But he *must* get tired of trusting people who never pay."

"He will not get tired of trusting *us*, mother."

"Well, perhaps not. But even if he continues to send us food, how are we to cook it? We will have no wood and no money to buy any."

"Oh! as to wood, mother dear, we shall do very well. I have not much to do just now; the business of the shop is not very heavy, you know," said Owen, archly, "and so I can take my big basket and go out into the woods every morning, and in an hour's time gather sticks enough to keep our air-tight going all day!"

"To be sure; so you might, love. I never thought of that. But, oh, Owen, I couldn't let you do it, either. It would be so hard on you this cold weather, and we are going to have snow soon, too."

"Snow! oh, that's nothing. Us boys love snow."

"*We* boys, Owen."

"*We* boys, then, mother. You see I knew better; only I talk so fast. We boys love snow and I shall enjoy it."

"But your poor little shoes are so broken, Owen. And we have no money to buy new ones."

"Oh, that's nothing neither. Nancy says her brother Tom can mend them as good as new. He is a cobbler by trade, you know. And he mends shoes for all the village. And Nancy says she will carry mine to him some night after I have gone to bed, and make him sit up late to finish them, so that I can have them when I get up in the morning. Won't that be nice?"

"Very."

"And so you see, mother dear, we shall get on very well."

"Yes, love, if I could only see my way through paying the rent."

"Oh, mother, now, that is borrowing trouble. And dear father used to say we should never borrow trouble. Why, rent day is two months off yet."

"So it is, my love. Oh, Owen, I ought not to sadden your young life with all these gloomy doubts and fears of mine. But then, you know, I have no one else to speak to. You are my only confidante, my little son," she said, embracing him.

"Always bosom friends, you and I, mother dear, ain't we?"

"Always, little son."

"We'll always tell each other all our secrets, won't we?"

"Always, darling."

"You know Bill Spicer, Mr. Spicer's little son? Well, he said he and Bob Durkee were sworn friends, and told each other all their secrets about robbing apple trees and birds' nests and that. And he asked me who was *my* sworn friend, and I told him mother."

Again Amy drew her boy to her bosom, and kissed him, as she answered:

"You could not have a safer one, dear."

The next day was Saturday. And directly after breakfast, Owen, having made an inspection of the wood shed, came to his mother and said:

"Mother dear, there are but two long logs left. And they won't more than last to-day. And as this is Saturday, and it *does* threaten snow, hadn't I better take the big basket and go into the woods now?"

"Yes, Owen, love, but wrap yourself up warm."

The boy got ready and set out in great glee. That day he went into the fuel free trade with much zeal. In half an hour he returned with a basketful of sticks; and without even stopping to warm himself he hurried back for more. In half a dozen excursions to the woods, he brought back enough sticks to stock the wood-shed with fuel to last for several days.

"I am very glad that to-morrow is Sunday and there will be no work to do. For I am just about tired enough to drop," said the boy to himself, as he piled up the last basketful of chips.

Then he washed his hands and went into supper.

"There, mother dear," he said, cheerfully, as he helped himself to a slice of corn bread and poured a little molasses on his plate—"There! now let the snow come as soon

as it likes! The shed is half full of sticks. We have got fuel enough to keep us warm for a week."

"My dear boy! what a comfort you are to me, Owen! But oh, to think after your hard day's work, you should have nothing better for supper than bread and molasses."

"Molasses! why, mother, I don't think there is any thing in the world better than molasses—I mean nicer to eat. It is so sweet and thick and smooth. I like to sop it up with my bread," said the boy, heartily.

"Do you, Owen, do you really like it?"

"Better than any thing except gingerbread and taffy; and just as well as I do them."

"Since I can give you nothing better, I am glad you like it, dear."

"But, mother, I wish *you* would try some of it. I don't think you know how good it is. You take nothing but tea and bread."

"It is enough for me, Owen."

"But tea is such poor stuff!"

"It is stimulating. It is meat and drink both to me, Owen. It keeps me up wonderfully."

"I just wish you'd be 'suaded to take half o' my br'iled herrin?" said Nancy, who was cooking that savory morsel on the little gridiron of the air-tight, for her own supper.

"No, thank you, Nancy, it would give me the headache; salt fish always does. Leave me to my own regimen."

"Your own regiment is a-killin' of you! that's what it is. Whoever heard tell of a nussin' mother livin' offen nuffin but tea and bread—day in and day out, week in and week out—nothin' but tea and bread! It's a-killin' of you, I say!"

"It keeps me up very well, Nancy. Bread you know is nutritious, and tea is stimulating."

"Well, s'posing bread is mutinous and 'tea tintilating! and s'pose dey do keep you up, it's only for a little while, and then you draps right down into weakness again. Think

I ain't got no eyes? Look at your cheeks now. As hollow as empty tea-cups, and as scarlet as strawberries! And just look at them two babies! both of them as thin as skelepens. And all for the want of you eatin' a plenty of meat!"

"But, Nancy, my good woman, if the meat is not to be had, what is to be done? People must be content and trust in the Lord even unto death. He who caused the few loaves and fishes to feed and to satisfy the multitude of several thousand men and women, can cause my spare diet to nourish and support my life if in His wisdom He sees fit to do so," said Amy, reverently.

"I know He can; and He can cause others to rise up and help you too! Which as long as you're talking 'bout 'ligion, it puts in my head just what to do. And please my precious Lord I'll do it, if I live to see Monday morning. I'll walk myself right straight up to de parsonage house, and I'll talk to de Reberent Mr. and Mrs. Morley, *good* I will. And I'll ax' em if dey thinks sich doings as dese ought to be done in a Christian impunity."

"*Community*, Nancy," said Amy, smiling.

"*Compunity*, then!"

"But, Nancy, you must not trouble Mr. and Mrs. Morley about me. I have no more claims on them than any other one of their large flock. And less indeed than any other, since I am a comparative stranger in the parish."

"Well, and what if you *is* an imperative stranger? So much the more reason for their paying 'tention to you. What does our precious Lord say about strangers and them as is good to them!—'Come, ye blessed of my Father, enter the kingdom; I was a stranger and ye took me in; for inasmuch as ye did it to the least of these, my brethern, ye did it unto me!' Dar, what you think o' dat? Now I gwine right straight up to de Reberent Mr. Morley and I gwine to take that text and preach to him good. And show him somebody else can preach a sarmint as well as he!"

"Indeed you must not, Nancy. I will not have it. And if you disobey me in this matter we shall have a very serious falling out!"

"Shill we? Well, all I can say is, how, if something ain't done, *you* will have a falling *in* all to yourself. And it will be into a hole in the churchyard too!"

And here the conversation ceased between the mistress and servant.

Owen had been a silent listener to the altercation. Her poor boy had always taken his mother's word for the statement that tea and bread kept up her strength; and he had mistaken her red cheeks and sparkling eyes for the signs of returning health and spirits. But now he recalled to mind all his father's care of his mother, and especially his continual watchfulness that she should take a plenty of exercise in the open air to give her an appetite and then eat plenty of meat to give her nourishment. And Owen ruminated.

"As soon as the weather permits I will coax her to walk out every day. And I will trap hares and birds for her. I might have done *that* long ago: only I could not bear to take the poor little things that way; but then, when my mother's health is concerned, that is another thing." And he resolved to go to the woods and set traps to catch game for his mother, early on Monday morning.

Amy and her son having finished their frugal meal, arose from the table to make way for Nancy to eat her supper.

"And now Marse Owen, chile, you go to bed, so I can have your shoes to carry to brother Tom to mend to-night; and you can have 'em to wear to church to-morrow morning," said Nancy, as she laid her "b'rilled herrin" on her plate and poured out a large cup of tea for herself.

"Yes, Owen love, you look tired to death. Go to bed, my child," said Amy.

"Are you going to sit up late, mother?" anxiously inquired the boy.

"No, love, only until I bind the cuffs of your Sunday

jacket and mend my black gloves, and then I shall follow you up stairs."

"Mother, dear, do the two little sisters keep you awake at night?" inquired Owen, looking anxiously at Amy's fatigued countenance.

"No, love, not often."

"I hear them cry sometimes in the night."

"That is the other babe; mine never cries."

"Mother, I do wish you would let Nancy take one little sister at night and let me take the other. Indeed we could take care of them. Indeed you oughtn't to be kept awake by them. You know dear father used to say that you should never lose your rest."

"I do not lose much rest, Owen. And as for the children, no one here but myself could take proper care of them at night. Do not wear that troubled little face, my darling boy: I shall do very well with the children. Good-night, love. Say your prayers and go to bed," said Amy, drawing her little son to her bosom and tenderly embracing him.

Owen returned her caress and then slipped off his shoes and gave them to Nancy to be mended, and then he went up stairs to bed.

Owen now slept in the little back room over the sitting-room, and adjoining his mother's chamber, which was over the front shop. Heavily tasked as his childish strength had been, Owen could not sleep. Nancy's words had filled him with anxiety on his mother's account. And he lay awake anxiously watching and listening until he heard her come up stairs and go to bed. Then indeed, exhausted by fatigue, he yielded to the approaches of sleep.

The next morning the sky was darkened with heavy lowering white snow-clouds.

Owen and his mother went to church as usual; but they returned home in a snow-storm. It was a snow-storm long remembered in the neighborhood of Rogues' Harbor and all up and down the coast, where the snow came down thicker, faster and longer than anywhere else.

CHAPTER XII.

KINDNESS AND COMFORT.

O'er better waves to speed her rapid course
The light bark of my genius wafts her sail,
Well pleased to leave so cruel sea behind,
And of that second region I will tell.—*Dante.*

When Rogues' Harbor got up on Monday morning, it found the ground covered with snow, about three feet deep, and almost every fence hidden and every land-mark obliterated.

Amy looked out of the front shop window in perfect dismay. This was the regular day for sending to the grocery store for supplies. And the week's provisions were so nearly out that Nancy was drawing the last of the tea and baking the last of the flour for breakfast.

Owen was all eagerness and glee. The short-lived anxiety of childhood had passed away from his mind for the present.

"Make haste, Nancy," he said, dancing about the stove. "Hurry up the cakes, Nancy! You know this is Monday, and directly after breakfast I have got to go to Mr. Spicer's for the week's groceries." And he seemed really impatient to be out in the beautiful snow.

"Oh, Owen, love, you can never go out on such a day as this. You would freeze or catch your death of cold," said Amy, coming in from the shop.

"Lor, mother dear, the snow don't hurt *we* boys!" said Owen, roguishly.

"*Us* boys, Owen."

"There now! the other day when I said *us* boys, you said *we* boys! And now that I say *we* boys, you say *us* boys! There is no pleasing *you*, mother!" said Owen, mischievously.

Amy turned quickly round in surprise, but when she saw the twinkle of her little son's blue eyes, she smiled and answered:

"You know the difference well enough, you monkey."

After breakfast Owen wrapped himself up in his little cloak, took his big basket on his arm and presented himself, saying:

"Now then, mother dear, *I'm* all ready. Is the note written?"

"Owen, look how deep the snow is, and how fast it is still falling! And it is such a long way to Spicer's! Take off your things, dear; I cannot consent to your going out indeed."

"All right, mother," said Owen, as he reluctantly took off his cloak and resigned himself to stay in-doors.

They had nothing whatever in the house for the second meal of that day.

All day long Amy sat in her little low sewing-chair, with her busy fingers engaged in mending the children's clothes, and her foot on the rocker of the cradle, where the two infants slumbered.

Owen sat with his books and slate before him, studying his lessons.

Nancy was busying herself up-stairs and down getting together the week's washing against the time when the sky would clear off.

Late in the day, when they were very hungry, Amy went searching about in all the cupboards in the sitting-room and in the kitchen to see if she could find a stray piece of bread. She found a half of a very stale loaf, and she found an onion, probably the property of Nancy, who belonged to an onion-loving race.

"Now, if I had a little lump of butter, I could make a savory dish out of this piece of stale bread and this onion," said Amy, bringing her "findings" into the sitting-room.

"Is it a bit o' butter you want, Miss Amy?" called Nancy, from an upper room.

"Yes, Nancy."

"Well, honey, you just look in the kitchen cupboard, kivered up under the little yellow bowl, and you'll find a bit o' that little print as brother Tom give me o' Saturday night. Take it, honey."

Amy went and got the butter. Then she filled a kettle of water and set it on the stove. Then she cut and toasted her stale bread; took a medium-sized bowl; laid in the bottom of it a layer of the toast; cut over that a thin slice of onion and a flake of butter, with a little pepper and salt; then another layer of dry toast; then a little more onion, butter, pepper and salt; and so on until the bowl was half full. Then she filled it up with boiling water; covered it closely and set it on the stove to steep for fifteen minutes. At the end of that time Amy set the table and placed upon it as cheap, simple and savory a little dish as ever poor mother and son sat down to eat.

Half of the mess they left on the stove to keep warm for Nancy.

A little later in the afternoon the snow ceased to fall and the sky cleared.

"Oh! mother, dear," exclaimed Owen, who was standing at the front shop window, "do come and look how beautiful it is out. The sun is setting yellow as gold; and the boys are all out on the street, snow-balling. I can go to Spicer's now; and I can get back before dark; and you can have a cup of tea."

Amy came to his side to make an examination of the weather.

"Yes, love; I think you can go now; but wrap yourself up warm," she said.

And, while Owen went to prepare himself, she stepped up to the little shop desk to write the order.

With how much doubt, and shame, and compunction poor

Amy wrote that weekly order, no one but the Lord knew. She had a faint hope of paying it some day or other; but when? Who could tell? Would her creditor believe in her promises of payment, and continue to renew the credit, and increase the account from week to week? Or did she herself even believe them? Were they perfectly sincere? Amy did not know. She felt like a swindler—a person who was obtaining goods under false pretences. And if the grocer should refuse to let her have any more, she felt that she could not blame him in the least. Her feelings so overcame her, that while writing this little order she had to turn her head aside to weep. Still one large tear fell upon the writing, and blotted out her piteous little promise to pay. Eloquent tear! more powerful than any promise could be.

By the time the note was finished, Owen came with his little cloak around him, and his big basket on his arm.

"I have blotted it, Owen; and I haven't got any more paper to write another. But tell him, Owen, that I will pay as soon as ever I can—indeed, I will; and tell him how much obliged I am to him for trusting me," she said.

"All right, mother dear; I'll tell him. But *he* knows all that. Don't you be afraid of Mr. Spicer, mother," replied the boy, as he took the order and hurried away.

Amy resumed her seat by the cradle of the children, who were now both awake and both crying. They had grown so large now that she could not take both in her arms at the same time. So, naturally, she took up her own child first, leaving the other one to wail a few minutes longer in the cradle. Then Nancy came and took up that other one.

When the children were once more asleep, Amy resumed her needle-work, and worked on, while waiting for the return of Owen.

Nancy put on the tea-kettle, and set the table, so as to be ready to serve tea as soon as the boy should get home.

Amy waited on—in how much doubt, suspense and anxiety! For, notwithstanding all that Owen had said to encourage her, she dreaded that Mr. Spicer should become impatient and disgusted at her poor little unpromising promises of payment, and should send the boy home with an empty basket and an angry message. And she was sure she would not blame him if he did. Only, in that case, what should she and her little ones do?

And she thought of her little son—of what an inestimable blessing he was to her; how patient of work and of want; making no boyish complaints for lost boyish pleasures.

"Poor little fellow!" said Amy to herself; "since his father died he has not had a single indulgence of any sort—not even a sixpence of spending money, not even a bit of gingerbread, or a stick of taffy. How I wish I could make him a cake for Christmas."

A long time Amy had to wait for her son that evening; much longer than ever before. It grew dark, and the candle was lighted and set upon the table. And Amy drew up to it to go on with her sewing. But frequently she jumped up and looked out of the shop door, to see if her little son was coming. A greater anxiety was creeping over her. The thought of *another* fatal night of watching, and how it ended.

"Oh! if something should have happened to my precious boy, I should die! I should die!" she cried, coming back from a last, long look up the dark street, and throwing herself into her chair.

"Oh, Nancy!" she asked, "what do you think is keeping him?"

"He done sot down his basket some'ers, and gone to playing snow-ball," answered Nancy, doggedly.

"It is not so! You know my darling boy *never* stays when I send him of an errand!" exclaimed the mother, almost angrily.

"Well, boys *will* be boys; that is all *I* can say."

"Oh, dear! it seems to me if my precious child was back with me again I would not mind any other trouble in the world!" said Amy, wringing her hands and jumping up to run to the door once more.

"Now, Miss Amy, don't you keep on exposing of yourself so, going out there in the cold, with nothing 'tall round you. You'll get your death, and then what'll 'come o' the chillun? Don't you bother 'bout Marse Owen. He ain't so very late, nohow. And just you 'member how much longer it takes to walk through the snow than it do to walk on dry land," said Nancy.

But Amy, without heeding her, hurried on.

And just then voices were heard at the door. Young, fresh, boyish voices, full of glee. And one of them was that of Owen.

"Thanky', Bill," he said.

"You're welcome. I'll go now, O," said the other.

"Oh, no, don't; come in, Bill!"

"I don't like to."

"Oh, yes! mother'll be glad."

Amy put a stop to this boyish talk by tearing open the door and exclaiming:

"Thank heaven, you have come! Oh, my dear boy, I was so uneasy about you! What kept you so late, Owen?"

"Why, you see, mother dear, Christmas times, and the shop full of people buying things for the holidays. I say, mother, here's Bill Spicer. He helped me all the way home with this big basket, and now he won't come in. Make him come in, mother."

"Come in, my dear, and warm and rest yourself. I thank you very much for helping Owen with the basket. It was very kind of you."

"Oh, no, it was fun!" answered the boy—a rosy-cheeked lad of about the same age as Owen.

"But come in, my dear," persisted Amy, seeing that he still hung back.

"Oh, no, ma'am, thank you. I'll help O in with this, and then I must run home. Father'll want me," said the boy, as in conjunction with Owen he lifted the heavy basket over the threshold of the door, and then ducked a short nod, and ran off.

"And so he sent the things once more. How good of him! Oh, how good to keep on trusting me against hope!" said Amy, fervently.

"I tell you, mother dear, you needn't be afraid of *his* not sending the things. As long as you order them, he'll send them," said Owen, confidently.

"I sometimes think he will. But oh! Owen, that very thing it is that makes me feel almost dishonest. Oh, Owen, if I should never be able to pay him!"

"Tell you, mother dear, *I'll* pay him, some of these days —yes, pay him all. Interest and compound interest, too!"

"Heaven send that you may, my dear! But now take up the basket, Owen, and bring it into the back room."

Owen made a feint of lifting the basket, and then dropped it heavily, and drew a long breath.

"What is the matter, my dear?"

"Why, mother, I *can't* lift it; it is too heavy. If I *could* have lifted it, Bill Spicer needn't have come all this way to help me, you know."

"Why, my dear, it is no heavier than usual."

"Oh! isn't it neither? You just try to lift it, mother."

"But I didn't order any thing more than I always do," said Amy, as she attempted to lift the covered basket and dropped it.

"What have you got in it, Owen? I hope you haven't run in extra debt."

"Oh, no, mother dear. Call Nancy to help me in with it, and then you'll see what there is, and I will tell you all about it."

Nancy was called from the back room, and she came forward and raised the heavy basket as though it were only a trifling, impertinent interruption, at the same time ordering "Marse Owen" to shake the snow off his boots and trowsers before coming into the back parlor.

Owen obeyed her, and then locked and barred the shop door, and followed with his mother into the back room.

Amy knelt down by the basket, lifted the cover, and exclaimed in dismay:

"Oh! Owen, my dear, this is very extravagant. I never ordered a quarter part of these things! It would have been a sin for *me* to order luxuries, when I cannot even afford to pay for necessaries."

"All right, mother; you won't have to pay for them. They are Mr. Spicer's Christmas gift to us. Oh, mother, you ought to have seen him when he read your order! *He looked at that big blot so!* I saw him do it, and frown like any thing, and clear his throat; and first I almost thought he took it as a slight for you to send him a blotted note. So I just told him what you told me, that you had blotted it by accident, and you had no more paper, else you would have made a fair copy. But he said, 'Nonsense!' And then he told his shopman to get the things you ordered, and put them into the basket. And then he told me to wait until he had done serving the customers that were already in the shop. And then, when he was done, he went to work and put up all these parcels, without weighing them, or charging them, and put them in the basket with his own dear, big hands, and told me to take them home to you for a Christmas gift. And he called his son Bill, and ordered him to help me carry the basket, which he did willingly. Bill is a nice boy, mother; just as nice a boy as his father."

"Oh, how good of him! Oh, how good! And I wronging the man by thinking he wouldn't trust me for the necessaries of life I was in want of. And here he is giving

me the luxuries as a free gift. God bless him, Owen," said Amy, fervently.

"*Of course* the Lord will bless him, mother. And I guess he knows he will, too."

"But now the things. Take them out, Owen, dear, and let me see what they are."

"And take out the paper of tea first. The kettle has been boiling this hour, and I want to set the tea to draw," said Nancy.

"I can't, Nancy. The tea and all the things that mother ordered are at the bottom of the basket. I must take out the Christmas gifts first," said Owen, kneeling before the basket and lifting out first a fine pair of fowls.

"There, mother! a farmer brought those into Mr. Spicer's shop to trade them off for groceries. And when he was gone away again, Mr. Spicer threw them into our basket and said *he* had no use for them, and they wouldn't keep, so I had better take them home to you."

"Oh, Owen, I had been wishing for something like this so much. We haven't had such a luxury as this for months."

"No, indeed. And here is a pound of fresh butter and a dozen fresh eggs. And here is a pound of figs, and one of raisins, and one of almonds. And here is a paper of ginger and one of spice. And here is a lump of suet, and a bit of beef. And I do believe, mother, that he sent into his own kitchen and got the suet and the beef while I was waiting; for you know *he* don't keep those things in his shop to sell. What do *you* think?"

"I think he is a good, kind, generous man! And I pray God to repay him."

"The Lord will do that! And here, mother, here is a little bottle of cider, and a bit of citron. And now we can have some mince pies and some gingerbread, can't we?"

"Yes, my darling, darling boy! thanks to that good

man, you will have something nice for Christmas!" said Amy, as the tears sprang to her eyes.

"And, mother, he says that *you* musn't fret about the *bill*, because *he* don't one bit. He says if you want any thing more than you order, *order it*, and he will send it! that he is not afraid but what he will get his money sooner or later. And above all, you are not to blot any more orders!—Mother, what made him so particular about the blots?"

Amy had no secrets from her little son. So she answered—between smiles and tears:

"Oh, Owen, Owen dear, I could not help it! But it was a large *tear* that fell upon the writing and blotted it! And in the depths of his good heart he knew where it came from, and he pitied me, and that is the whole mystery, my child!"

"Oh, mother, I hope it won't be long before I can do something for Mr. Spicer, just to show him, you know, how thankful I am!" said Owen, earnestly.

"Look y' here! We ain't none of us had much dinner to speak of. So if you'll be so good as to hand out that tea and that flour, I'll get supper right off," said Nancy.

And Owen laughed, and complied with her request.

And Amy closed her eyes and offered up a mental thanksgiving for her unexpected comforts, and invoked the blessing of the Lord upon the kind heart that had made the widow's and the orphan's heart to "sing for joy!"

CHAPTER XIII.

BRIGHTER HOPES.

Oh, how you wrong our kindness, doubting us—
With friends there is not such a word as debt!
Where amity is tied with bond of truth,
All benefits are there in common set.—*Carew.*

The New Year opened a little more hopefully for the widow and her children. The Christmas gift did Amy good in mind as well as in body. For while the food greatly nourished her failing strength, the kindness restored her faith in the kind feelings of her creditor, so that instead of shivering with fear of him, she glowed with gratitude to him.

Never before did food go so far or do so much good in one little family. The two chickens lasted Amy a whole week. No one else ate of them. Owen really preferred the gingerbread, mince pies and molasses and bread—all of which rather indigestible food his healthy stomach and his active out-door work enabled him to dispose of. And Nancy affected a preference for savory fried liver and bacon, of which that convenient brother Tom of hers had sent a Christmas supply. So the delicacies were left for Amy, and nourished her exceedingly. She actually picked up flesh in that one week.

Owen went every day to the woods to gather sticks for the fire, and to set his trap for wild game. And he always returned with a large bundle of fagots, and occasionally also with a bird or even a hare.

But when a week or two had passed away and meat grew scarce again, and Amy's face began to look wan and hungry—for it requires a plenty of nourishing food to keep up the strength of a nursing mother, particularly when she

is nursing two children, and is naturally fragile in constitution—Owen grew very anxious, and sought about in his own mind for a method by which he might make a little money to buy meat for his sinking mother. He reflected that work as diligently as he might, and as he did, at his fagot gathering, and at his trapping, and at every thing that his hands and feet could find to do, he had still abundance of leisure time left. And this he longed to employ profitably for his mother's sake.

One morning he formed a sudden resolution, upon which he immediately acted. He started out in search of work. He went all over the village, calling at every shop, to know if they wanted a boy to carry out parcels. But everywhere he received the same discouraging answer—"No, they did not."

The very last place he called at was "Lacy's Dry Goods and Fancy Store;" which, it will be remembered, was exactly opposite his mother's house.

As Owen entered, Lacy himself was standing behind the counter, engaged in rolling up and arranging goods that had just been displayed to a customer who had left. There was no one else in the store.

Owen looked down involuntarily, longingly, almost covetously, at the handsome case of perfumery, cutlery and toilet apparatus that stood upon the counter; and he thought of the time when the empty case on his own counter was full, and he made a little money every day by selling its contents as long as they lasted; but was unable to save a dollar towards renewing the stock when it was gone.

Mr. Lacy, having finished rolling up his goods, now turned to Owen, who stood respectfully waiting his leisure to speak:

"Well, my little lad, what is your pleasure? Any thing in my line to day?" he cheerfully inquired.

"Oh no, sir! Mother wouldn't think of getting any

thing else until she has paid for what she has had," said the boy.

"Oh, that is of no consequence whatever. I wish you would tell her so."

"Thank you, sir, I will," said Owen; and then he stopped and seemed to hesitate, for frequent repulses had rather discouraged him.

"Well, now, then, my lad, what is it? You have come for something," said Lacy, heartily.

"If you please, sir, it was to ask you if you might want a boy," said Owen, bashfully.

"A boy! No, my lad. What should I want with a boy?"

"I thought you might want one to run with messages, or carry parcels, or sweep the shop, and make the fires."

"No, I do not. My porter does all that, and plays half his time."

Owen's countenance, not very hopeful on his first entrance, now fell perceptibly.

"Was it for yourself you were inquiring?" said Lacy, kindly.

"Oh, yes, sir! Do you know of any one that wants a boy, sir?"

"No, I do not! But why should you want a place as errand-boy?"

"Oh, sir, to do something to help mother!" said Owen, in a half heart-broken tone.

"Is that necessary, my lad?" said Mr. Lacy, bending over the counter, and looking attentively into the anxious face of the child.

"Oh, yes, indeed, sir! very, very necessary," replied Owen.

"But the shop?—I thought you were required at home to mind the shop."

"Oh, no, sir! there is nothing to do in the shop."

"How is that?"

"There are no customers now."

"But why? It is the only shop of the kind in the village."

"Yes, sir; but mother was sick and people began to be afraid to trust me to sell them the medicines—although, indeed, they might as well have done so, because I always sold it right, and I never meddled with any thing that I didn't know all about. But they were afraid to trust a boy like me, sir; and they stopped coming; and that is all about it," said the child, sadly.

"But then you kept quite an assortment of perfumery, cutlery, brushes, and such things. You might have made something on the sale of those."

"Yes, sir," answered the boy, hesitatingly, "we had a lot of those things; but most of the people who wanted any of them always came over here to you to buy. But still we did make some money by those that dealt with us as long as our little stock of goods lasted. But when it was all gone, we had no money to renew it."

"And so the business of the little shop is really gone?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, Owen, my poor fellow, don't be disheartened I—— Now, *don't* look so miserable, my child! You are too young to have such a care-worn face——"

"It isn't for myself, sir—it is for my mo-mother!" said the boy, with a sob that he could not entirely repress.

"Well, I know that, my little man. But she will be taken care of. 'The cattle upon a thousand hills is the Lord's;' and He is the 'God of the widow and of the fatherless.'"

"Yes, sir, I know. Mother often says so. But—you couldn't think of anybody that might want a boy to—to black boots, or clean knives, or any thing, could you, sir?" asked Owen, taking up the previous question.

"I could not, my lad; and neither do I think that black-

ing boots and cleansing knives would be a proper occupation for the son of the late Doctor Wynne."

"Oh, sir, I would do any thing in the world that is honest to h-help *her!*" replied the child, with another ill-repressed and half heart-broken sob.

"Well spoken, my little man. Never fear but you will find proper employment, Owen. It is said that 'Satan finds some mischief still for idle hands to do.' And it is certain that God finds work for willing hands. I will make inquiries, and if I can hear of any thing that would be proper for you I will let you know."

"Thank you very much, sir," said the boy, bowing politely, as he turned to leave the shop.

"Stay, Owen, if you please," said Lacy, calling him back, and at the same time taking a case of goods from a side shelf.

"Yes, sir," answered Owen, hoping against hope that a prospect of work was dawning in Mr. Lacy's mind, and that he had called him back to tell him of it. But no. Mr. Lacy sat the case upon the counter, opened it, took from it a baby's white Berlin wool cloak, with hood attached, and held it up, saying:

"My boy, I always send my regular customers New Year's presents. And now I must send one to your mother."

And here let it be explained what the "New Year's presents" usually sent by Mr. Lacy to his other regular customers were: neat envelopes containing his yearly bills for goods furnished them, together with respectful suggestions that prompt payment would be agreeable. But his New Year's present to the poor widow was to be quite another affair.

"Thank you very much, sir," said Owen, in reply to the dealer's kind words.

"I think I would like to send her this little cloak for the

baby. I think it very pretty," said Mr. Lacy, as he did up the cloak in a neat parcel and handed it to the boy.

"Thank you, sir," said Owen, as he received the parcel "but if you please, sir, for which of the babies is it?"

"For which! why, is there more than one?"

"Yes, please, sir, there are two little sisters."

Lacy looked surprised and perplexed, and after a little reflection, exclaimed:

"Why, my lad, is it possible that your mother has kept that little foundling all this time?"

"She has kept the other little sister all this time, sir, but please don't call her a foundling; because she wasn't found, you know. And at home we call her the other little sister," said Owen, in a tender, deprecating tone, such as he always used in speaking of the poor babe that had been cast upon his mother's care.

"Then I hope the friends of the child pay your mother well for her trouble," said Lacy.

"I don't think the other poor little sister has any friends in the world but us; and that is why we like to take care of her. The Lord left her to us, sir."

"What, Owen! Is it possible that your poor, dear mother, in her feeble health and straightened circumstances, actually kept that babe for charity?" inquired Lacy, in surprise, and, if it must be said, in admiration.

"For charity—oh dear, no, sir! It is at the almshouse where they take babes for charity, and the babes mostly die of it, folks say. Oh, no, sir, we keep the other little sister for love," said Owen, uttering, in his unconscious innocence, a severe sarcasm against the county poor-house.

"Give me back that parcel, my boy," said Mr. Lacy.

Owen yielded it up, wondering why the dealer recalled his gift.

Mr. Lacy had no intention of doing so. He only opened the parcel to add to it another little cloak, and then he returned it to Owen, saying:

"There, my lad, the first cloak I put in was for your own little sister; and the second is for the other little one; but as they are both exactly alike, it is hardly necessary to say any thing about it."

"Oh, I *do* thank you so much, sir! so very, very much!" said Owen, earnestly, as he bowed and once more turned to leave the shop.

He ran across the street in great glee, pushed open the door, and ran into the back parlor, where his mother sat, nursing her own child, while "the other little sister" lay in the cradle with its fists in its mouth.

"Where have you been all the morning, my boy?" inquired Amy, with a shade of anxiety in her tone.

"Oh, mother, looking for work. I couldn't find any; but Mr. Lacy has promised to look out and try to find some for me. And oh, mother, look here! Look what beautiful cloaks Mr. Lacy has sent to the two little sisters for a New Year's present!" he exclaimed, eagerly, unwrapping the parcel and displaying the cloaks.

Amy took them in her hands and looked at them, half in pleasure, half in pain, as she said:

"They are very beautiful! And Mr. Lacy is very, very good. But—I hate to accept such valuable gifts from him, or indeed from any one, Owen."

"Oh, but, mother, it seems to be his practice to send New Year's presents to all his regular customers. So it is all right, you see."

"I doubt very much whether he sends such valuable presents as these to all his regular customers. And besides, I am not a regular one, or at least not a very profitable one."

"Oh, mother, if you mean about his bill, he says that is of no consequence at all. And he told me to tell you he said so."

"He is very good, but of course he will want his money, sooner or later."

"It will be later then, mother dear."

"I suppose," said Amy, looking at the cloaks with satisfaction and desire—"I do suppose it would seem ungrateful to send them back. I suppose it would not be well to do so."

"Oh, no, no, no, mother, dear! never do that!"

"And then the children *do* want them so badly."

"Oh, yes, don't they, though? They hadn't a thing to wear out. And now, mother dear, you can take them to church to be christened, can't you?"

"Yes, darling, and I will do so, the very next christening Sabbath."

By this time Amy had taken one of the cloaks, and was trying it on her baby to see how it looked.

Owen watched the process a while, and then he took up the other little one, and began to dress her in the other cloak, murmuring to her with infinite tenderness:

"You shall have *your* 'ittle cloak on too. Owen will put it on for you."

"I think, Owen, that you love that child better than you do your own sister."

"Oh, no, I don't, mother, dear. But this is such a *poor little sister*. And you don't love her like you do your own baby."

"It is not natural that I should, Owen; but I take care of her, and that is more than many others in my circumstances would do."

"I know that, mother, dear. You take care of her, and that is very good—very, very good. But you don't love her, and I sorter think."

"Don't say 'sorter,' Owen."

"Well then I *kinder* think."

"That's just as bad. Say 'rather.'"

"I rather think this poor little sister knows you don't love her."

"What makes you think so, Owen?"

"Oh, haven't I seen her put up her poor little lip to cry when you've looked at her so!"

"Looked at her *how*, Owen?"

"Oh, *you* know, mother, and so does she; but I can't describe it."

"I suppose I do look gravely on the child sometimes. It is when the thought crosses my mind, that but for her, my children would not be fatherless; but I do it involuntarily. Heaven knows I never mean to be unkind to the poor babe!" said Amy, compunctiously.

"She could not help what happened, mother dear.—You could not help it, Little May, could you? Look at mother, Little May, and tell her so," said Owen, tenderly raising the child and holding her up to his mother.

Amy stooped and kissed the babe, with so much real kindness in her sad eyes that the little creature smiled, jumped and crowed with satisfaction.

"See how grateful she is for a little love, mother dear," said Owen.

"You give her a good deal of love, Owen."

"Yes, mother dear, I will love her as long as I live—my Little May!" said Owen, fondly.

Yes, it was true! Amy did not love the little creature that Providence had cast upon her care. Partly from compassion, partly from conscientiousness, and partly from a feeling that if she should be good to this poor orphan, Heaven would bless her own children, Amy took care of Little May.

One word about the names that had been conferred upon these children. At first Amy had called her own child "my baby." And in speaking of her to Owen she called her "your little sister." But she called the other child always "the other baby." Owen called the first "little sister," and the second "the other little sister." But at length it had become expedient to distinguish them by other names—and so the child of Amy was called Gladys

because that had been the name of Doctor Wynne's mother and favorite sister; while the child of "Nobody" was called Mary because that simple name was the first to occur to the minds of the family. But Gladys was soon shortened to Gay and Mary to May. And then the names were lengthened by the pet prefix "Little," so that Gladys became Little Gay and Mary became Little May. Each name seemed to suit each child very well; for Gay was a lively, dancing, crowing infant, and May was a very quiet one. They had not yet received the rites of baptism, because Amy had no decent outer garments in which to present them at the altar. But that difficulty was now removed by the kindness of Mr. Lacy; and Amy resolved to take them to church on the very first Sunday that the rites of baptism should be administered.

CHAPTER XIV.

A SURPRISE.

How goes the night in the widow's cot?
Are the blinds fast closed? Does the fire shine clear?
Are they working together? Is he forgot?—*Edith May.*

On the Friday of that week, after the house had been shut up for the night, the widow and her little family were gathered together in the back parlor.

The stove was burning brightly with the sticks that Owen had gathered in the woods.

One tallow candle stood upon the round table, on one side of which sat Amy, engaged in needle-work; while on the other side sat Owen, with his slate and books before him.

The two little sisters were put to bed for the night.

In an obscure corner behind the stove stood Nancy kneading dough for the next day's bread.

While they were all thus employed, there came a rap at the outer door.

Amy dropped her work, turned pale and listened. Poor Amy, with her perpetually overhanging dread of duns, was always startled by every knock, whether it came by day or by night. And this knock was peculiarly startling from its coming at such an unusual hour of the night.

Owen pushed aside his books, jumped up and ran to open the door.

Amy held her breath.

There was a pleasant voice speaking; a short colloquy; and then Owen re-entered the back parlor, saying:

"Mother, dear, it is Mr. Lacy. He wants to see you."

"I knew it—oh! I knew it would come at last. He wants his money, and I have not a cent to pay him! After all his kindness to us, too! Oh, it seems so ungrateful, so dishonest, so unpardonable in me! Oh! what *shall* I do?" exclaimed Amy, clasping her hands, trembling, and growing paler than before.

"I somehow don't think it is that, mother," said Owen.

"Oh, yes—yes, it is! But ask him to come in, Owen. I suppose I must see him," said Amy, in desperation.

Owen left the room for a moment, and then re-entered, ushering in Mr. Lacy, who came bowing and smiling.

Amy arose trembling, leaned with one hand on the table for support, and so waited to receive him.

"I have to make you an apology for coming at so late an hour, Mrs. Wynne. But, in truth, I could not come earlier," said Mr. Lacy, advancing towards her.

"No, sir," faltered Amy.

"The fact is that I had to wait until the shop was closed for the night."

"Yes, sir," answered Amy, quaking.

"I hope I have not disturbed you?" inquired Mr. Lacy, observing her agitated looks.

"Not at all. Will you sit down, sir?" said Amy, making a great effort to control herself in the presence of this dreaded creditor.

Mr. Lacy bowed, seated himself in the chair that had been recently occupied by Owen, pushed the boy's books and slate aside, leaned over the table towards Amy, and said:

"I called this evening on a little matter of business, Mrs. Wynne."

"Oh, I know—I know! I was expecting it. It ought to have been paid long ago, sir. And especially after your great kindness to us in sending us those beautiful cloaks for the children. And it should have been paid, sir, only that—that—"

"My dear Mrs. Wynne, what are you talking of? I have not come about my bill! I do not even know its amount yet. I have not even made it out. That can wait your convenience. It will not break me if I never get it. Don't distress yourself about *that.* I am in no sort of a hurry. I have come about quite another affair."

Amy looked up with surprise, relief and curiosity all blended in the expression of her wan countenance.

"Your son was over to my place a few days ago, and I learned from him that the business of your shop had rather fallen off."

"Rather? It is quite gone, sir," said Amy.

"As regards the dispensary, that is quite natural and unavoidable; but not so as regards the perfumery."

"Sir, our stock was exhausted."

"So I understood from your son. And also that you had not—that is to say you could not—I mean it was not convenient for you to renew it all at once," said Mr. Lacy, hesitatingly, for he was one of those who shrink from wounding in the least degree the feelings of the poor.

"We had no capital, sir," answered Amy, frankly.

"Well, but you have credit."

"Credit? Oh, no, sir! We are not known in the city; and even here our credit must suffer, I fear."

"Not at all. Well, Mrs. Wynne, to come to the point, I have a proposition to make to you."

Amy looked up again, rather in doubt this time. She had suffered so much, poor woman, that it was now habitual with her to fear rather than to hope.

"It is this, Mrs. Wynne: I have quite a fine stock of perfumery, cutlery, brushes, and so forth, which I really only keep for the accommodation of my customers, for they are not in the strict line of my business. Now I propose that you take the whole stock off my hands, at the original wholesale price. You can make thirty-three and a third per cent. on the sales, and you can pay me the original cost when convenient. It will be a little start for this fine lad of yours; and you can gradually increase the business; for you will have no competitor in the village, as I shall not keep any more of those articles; and when my old customers inquire for them, I will send them over to you."

"Oh! Mr. Lacy——" Amy began; but emotion choked her voice, tears filled her eyes, and she covered her face with her hands.

"It is not necessary to say a single word. It is but fair that I should turn this little trade over to you. I do not wish to monopolize the business of the village. People must live and let live, you know," said Lacy, heartily.

"But how shall I thank you? What can I say to you? I was so frightened when you came in. I thought that you had come to demand your just dues as was but reasonable. And I trembled because I had no money to pay you. I had expected anger and reproaches, and instead of that you came with sympathy and help. Oh, I am poor and weak, but the Lord is strong and mighty. May He who takes my sins upon Him, take this debt also, and may

He greatly recompense you," said Amy, in a broken and tremulous voice.

"Now, my dear Mrs. Wynne, don't make so much of a trifle. What I do is only what any just man would do in my place. It is very little and the only merit in it is that it is done willingly and gladly. You are one of us and you must be thought of. It would be hard indeed that one lone widow in a prosperous village like this should be forgotten. I hope the time may come when such a thing as a poor man, woman or child left to struggle on alone in the midst of a thriving community will be a mere tradition of the past that the children of the future will not believe in," said Lacy, warmly.

"And that 'll be the millinarium," muttered Nancy, in a low, sarcastic tone, as she kneaded her dough in the corner.

"And now, Owen, my lad," said Mr. Lacy, turning briskly towards the boy, "do you prepare your shop to receive the goods and I will send them over to-morrow morning."

And before any one could answer him, Mr. Lacy shook hands with Amy and Owen, and left the house, without the slightest doubt on his mind that Amy and her little son would finally pay him—the uttermost farthing of the debt.

"Well, now, that's what I call a rale gentleman, every inch of him! I didn't use to think so! I didn't use to like Marse Lacy at all! And I used to cut him up right short, whenever he would so much as ax arter the family. But now I begin to perfectly 'dore him!" said Nancy, emphatically, as she moved to the oven to put her bread to bake.

Amy did not answer; probably she did not hear. She dropped her arms upon the table, bowed her head upon them and wept.

Owen's arms were around her neck in an instant.

"What is the matter, mother dear?" he inquired.

"People are so good to me, Owen," was all her answer,

as she wiped away her tears and resumed her needle-work.

As soon as supper was over that evening, Owen spoke up briskly:

"Now, Nancy, if you will let me have a bucket, I will go to the pump and bring some water, and heat it, and give the counter and the cases a good cleaning, to get them ready for the new stock."

Nancy complied with his request. And Owen went diligently to work, and worked on to a late hour of the night to prepare the shop for its new honors.

Early the next morning, Mr. Lacy sent over the new goods. And Owen had a fine time arranging them in his clean cases.

This was Saturday morning, when many of the country-people came in to the village to do their shopping.

And Owen had scarcely finished arranging the pretty and attractive fancy goods under their glass cover, before he was interrupted by the entrance of a customer—sent to him of course by Mr. Lacy. This customer wanted to buy a set of brushes and combs; some tooth-powder and a bottle of cologne.

Owen had to refer to the invoice, before he could set a price on these articles. They amounted to five dollars and a half. And so the customer put a half-eagle and a half-dollar into the hands of Owen, who proudly put them into the empty till, and felt that the foundation of a fortune had been laid.

Then came a man who bought a set of razors and a razor-strop. And then a woman bought a pair of scissors. And another woman bought a box of powder and a pot of pomatum. Then a negro bought a pen-knife. Among these were intermixed a few idlers who priced every thing and purchased nothing.

All these, purchasers and pricers, had applied first to Mr. Lacy, and had been sent by him over to Mrs. Wynne.

It was a busy and a happy day for Owen. He never

left the shop for a moment until the hour of closing, when he was called in to supper.

"Only think, mother dear," he said, gleefully, "I have taken in to-day eleven dollars and eighty-seven cents! At the rate of thirty-three per cent. profit, that is nearly four dollars clear gain! At this rate we shall make our fortunes, mother!"

"My poor boy, I do not wish to damp your hopes. But you must not be too sanguine, Owen. This is Saturday, you know—the very busiest day in the week with shopkeepers. You must not expect to sell so much every day," said Amy, gravely.

"I know that, mother dear. I make allowance for that; but if we do not take in half as much money on other days—just think! we shall be able to live like lords and have meat two or three times a week!"

"You forget, Owen, love. Every cent of that money must be laid by as fast as it is taken in, to pay Mr. Lacy. Yes, to pay him all! not only for the stock of goods, but for the mourning we bought of him last summer."

"I know that, mother. But—"

"But what, Owen?"

"I thought we would lay by this time the even dollars and take the odd eighty-seven cents and buy something good for dinner to-morrow."

His tone was a pleading one, but its pleadings were not for himself; they were for *her*, that beloved and suffering mother.

But Amy did not understand it so; and it was of him only that she thought as she asked:

"What would you like, Owen?"

"Oh! mutton soup with carrots and turnips, and rice and drop dumplings in it," answered the boy, naming a dish that poor Amy, who was always both hungry and thirsty, particularly relished.

"Very well, my dear. You are right, I know. We will

invest the eighty-seven odd cents in that dinner," answered Amy, who fondly believed that she was only consulting her little son's appetite when she gave this consent.

"Hurry up, Nancy! Give me the market-basket, and I will run over to the market-shop. I know they haven't shut up yet. They never do on Saturday nights until nearly twelve o'clock."

Nancy, nothing loth, but very eager, went and fetched the basket; and Owen put on his little cloak, took it, and started on his errand.

But his mother called him back.

"Owen, love, while I think of it, you had better take the odd dollar, also, and buy yourself a pair of boots to wear to church to-morrow. Your old ones are so bad. But the round sum of ten dollars, Owen, must be put by sacredly, to commence the fund for paying Mr. Lacy. He *must* be paid, even before we think of saving money to renew the stock."

"Yes, indeed, mother dear! I know that! Not that I think Mr. Lacy is bothering himself about his pay; but still, as you say, he must have it. And when a debt is once paid, it is paid, and hasn't to be 'paid over again,' as Nancy says. Now, if we can only make money enough to pay Mr. Lacy, and to pay *cash* for our next stock, and have a little to spend as we go along, how jolly that would be! —Wouldn't it, mother dear?" said Owen, nodding and laughing as he left the shop.

He was gone about half an hour, at the end of which time he came in, rosy, happy and smiling, with his big basket.

Nancy relieved him of it, while he pulled off his cloak and warmed himself at the stove.

"Hi, honey! what you fetch this link o' sassage for?" inquired Nancy, holding up the article in question.

"Now, Nancy! to pretend you don't know! Why, neither mother nor I ever eat sausage."

"That's just what I axes you 'bout. What you fetch 'um for?"

"Why, for *you;* you know you never eat mutton broth; and I heard you say you were 'devotedly fond of pork sassage,'" laughed Owen.

"Well, and so I is. Mutton broth is poor wishy-washy tasteless stuff; but pork sassages—hush, honey! There ain't nothing in this world as good as pork sassages, unless it is stewed tripe and inguns, or fried liver and bacon done together. *There!* them's the dishes to set before a king!" said Nancy, with a sniff of satisfaction, as if she anticipated her feast for the next day.

"Owen, let me see your new boots," said Amy.

"Mother, dear, I didn't buy any."

"What! was the shoe-shop shut?"

"I don't know. I never looked. Indeed, I didn't take the other dollar with me; and I forgot all about my boots."

"My poor little lad! When will you ever spare thought upon yourself? I will send Nancy around to the shop with the money, and she can buy them for you."

"Oh, no, mother, don't. I don't want any new boots. Look at mine! They ain't handsome, I own. The patches on them are too big and clumsy; but they are warm and dry, I tell you. They keep out the cold and wet first-rate," said Owen, cheerfully, holding up to view a pair of boots that had been repaired in various places, with so much regard to strength rather than to elegance, that they forcibly reminded the beholder of the celebrated Cassim's Slippers.

The next day being Sunday, Amy and her little son went to church as usual.

On entering their pew, the first object that met their eyes was old Mrs. Morley, the minister's wife, seated in the parsonage pew. This old lady had been confined to her house by a trifling though persistent indisposition of some weeks' duration. And this was the first Sunday of her return to her accustomed place.

At the close of the services, Mrs Morley, with the feeble step of age, came tottering towards Amy to speak to her.

"How do you do, my dear?" she said, holding out her hand, which Amy clasped. "I have been uneasy about you and your little ones, very uneasy indeed, my dear; but now that I have got about again, I intend to call and see after you. How are you getting along, my dear?"

"Thank you, dear Mrs. Morley. Our prospects are something better than they were at the close of the year."

"Ah! the New Year is a renovator, always."

"I am very glad to see you out again, dear Mrs. Morley."

"Yes, dear, I'm sure you are! And I am very glad to get out. I don't know how it is with other old folks; but as for me, the older I grow the less I like confinement to the house and the more I love the open air and bright sun—even in winter, dear, even in winter. Good-bye, dear; good-bye, Owen, my boy; try to be a comfort to your mother," said the old lady, extending a hand each to Amy and her son.

"Oh, indeed I will try, ma'am," said Owen, earnestly.

"He does try and is a great comfort to me, Mrs. Morley," said Amy, tenderly.

"That's right! the Lord bless you both," said the old lady, pressing their hands, and then turning to receive her other friends, who were gathering around her with congratulations upon her recovery.

Amy and her son walked homeward through the deep snow.

"Now for the mutton broth and drop dumplings, mother dear!" said Owen, with all the eagerness of a hungry boy, as they entered their own door.

It was ready to be taken up. And by the time Amy and Owen took off their outer garments, the dinner was steaming on the table.

The half-famished mother and son sat down and ate with a keenness of appetite unknown to those that "fare sumptuously every day."

Fortunately, the babies were both asleep, else Amy would have had little chance to eat her dinner in peace.

"How well they sleep!" she said at length.

"Don't they though!" exclaimed Owen.

"Yes! and I reckon this ole 'oman knows the reason, too," said Nancy, nodding her head.

"Oh, Nancy! I hope you haven't given them any thing!" exclaimed the mother, in alarm.

"I ain't give 'um no physic, if you mean that. But you better believe I took up some of this broth when it was well b'iled, and afore I put the vege'bles in, and give 'um both as much as they could eat! And didn't they open their mouths and swallow it neither?—Hush, honey. You ought to seed um. And they been sleeping like tops ever since."

"But—Nancy, was that proper food for such young children?"

"They's more'n six months old, and it is the dead o' winter time—not like summer; and altogether it is time they was fed on some thing more stronger 'an your milk! Look how much good it's a-doing of um. Look how they sleeps. When did you ever see um sleep like this afore?"

Amy looked and saw that the proof was conclusive.

"They is satisfied now, they is. Hush, honey! I know how to manage children. I didn't fetch up thirteen dout losing one for nothing, did I? Better b'lieve I know what I'm doing."

Amy, looking at the children, seemed to think it likely that Nancy did know what she was doing.

And soon after she and her son arose from the table to give that worthy creature an opportunity of solacing herself with her favorite dish of "sassage."

And the afternoon and evening passed in peace.

CHAPTER XV.

STRUGGLES.

Toiling, rejoicing, sorrowing,
Onward through life he goes;
Each morning sees some task begun,
Each evening sees its close.
Something attempted, something done,
Has earned a night's repose.—*Longfellow.*

Owen arose bright and early on Monday morning Gayly he took down the shutters and opened the shop; then he lighted a little fire in the small cylinder stove, and went behind the counter and arranged his show-case; lastly he seated himself on the high stool, at the shop desk, and began to study the invoice furnished him by Mr. Lacy, that he might be well posted in the retail prices of the goods. He did this while waiting for customers.

But the early morning passed and no customers came in.

At eight o'clock Nancy called him into the back parlor to breakfast.

He went in, just a little discouraged. But he had scarcely sat down, and helped himself to some of the hash made of the cold mutton left from yesterday's dinner, when the shop bell rang sharply. It was made to ring by the opening of the door.

Owen dropped his knife and fork and eagerly ran into the shop. In a few minutes he returned again.

"Mother dear, it is the woman whose husband keeps the bar at the Elm Tree Inn. She wants to get some things on credit. Must I let her have them?"

"Of course, Owen," said Amy.

Owen hesitated for a moment as though he had some objection to advance; but finally he turned and went to obey his instructions. This time he was gone half an

hour, at the end of which he returned, looking a little depressed.

"She got seven dollars worth, mother dear," he said.

"Did she, love? She was a good customer."

"I don't know, mother. Father didn't think she was, although he let her have things on credit. She has been on our books for ever so long, mother."

"Ah, Owen, so are we on other people's, darling! We must give and take, dear."

"Yes, mother, but we are on other people's books for the necessaries of life that we cannot do without. And we pay as fast as we can. But this woman, Mrs. Ball, mother, runs in debt for luxuries like otto of roses, and bear's grease, and rouge, and lily-white, and she seldom or never pays, and there are so many like her, mother dear!—Enough in every village to break every tradesman in it if they would trust them. Mother, are you going to credit these people?" inquired Owen, very anxiously.

"My love, I must! I *ask* credit, Owen, and I am not refused. Therefore when credit is asked of me, I must give it."

"Yes, mother, but there is such a difference in our cases. We run in debt because we can't help it, and we mean to pay. But these other people, it seems to me, run in debt because they can do it, and they never mean to pay! Mother, you don't know how many names are on poor father's books! And as to these goods that we have got *now*, mother, it seems not right treatment of Mr. Lacy to risk them by selling them on credit, at least until we have made enough money by cash sales to pay him for them."

"There may be some reason in what you say, little son; but the whole case comes to this—that as long as we have the face to ask credit in the village, we cannot have the face to refuse it!"

"Oh, mother! I wouldn't refuse it to any one who was

known to be good pay; only to suspicious people. Mother dear, all our success depends on doing a cash business!"

"You wouldn't refuse it to any one who was known to be good pay. Owen, my boy, are *we* known to be good pay? By no means. And yet no one refuses to credit us. We must do as we are done by."

"Oh, mother dear, there is *such* a difference, if you would but see it!" said the boy.

But Amy would not "see it." And her little son was forced to obey her.

Owen had scarcely finished his breakfast before the shop bell rang sharply again.

He hurried away to answer his summons.

This time the visitor was a young lady, who priced every article in the case and then bought a lead-pencil for which she paid ten cents, and went away.

And that was the only cash customer Owen had all day. But then Monday was always a "slow" day for business.

The following days were rather faster; yet at the close of the week, when the young shop-keeper made up his book, he found that he had made nothing at all. His cash sales did not cover expenses, and his credit sales he knew would be more than half clear loss.

Owen knew where the evil lay—in the fatal habit of trusting untrustworthy people! But he could not remedy that evil while his gentle, tender-hearted, confiding mother insisted that credit should be given to all who ask it, because credit had been given to her.

Young as he was, Owen saw very clearly to what all this tended.

As other boys have been endowed with genius for art, science, or literature, so Owen Wynne was gifted with that wonderful commercial talent that afterwards made his name so famous among the merchant princes of our country.

He gently and respectfully, in his boyish way, tried to

argue with his mother on her ruinous manner of ordering the business of the shop, but all to no purpose. We all know that mules are perfectly docile animals compared to one of these gentle creatures like Amy, when they have once formed a resolution that they deem to be right. Mules may be mollified and mountains moved; but not they!

There was from twenty to thirty dollars taken in by Owen each week. But every dollar of this money was sacredly laid by to pay Mr. Lacy. And never except when, at the end of the week's accounts, there happened to be a few loose dimes left, did Amy indulge in the luxury of a little fresh beef or mutton.

Owen worked harder and more zealously than ever. As there was no money to spare to buy fuel, and very little to buy meat, Owen was still obliged to gather sticks for the fire and to set traps for the wild game. As it was necessary to do all this without neglecting the shop, Owen arose each morning long before it was daylight, went to the woods, and examined his trap; took any game that might have been caught in it, reset it, and then gathered a large basketful of sticks to fetch home. In two or three trips he would gather enough to last the day through. And from this last trip he would return in time to kindle the fire ready against Nancy came down to get breakfast, and to open the shop for the first customer.

About this time Amy also got a little work to do. There was a young lady of the neighborhood going to be married. And every dressmaker and seamstress in the village was set to work to make up her wedding clothes. Among the rest Amy received her share. And she worked diligently day and night, sparing herself not in the least. And the money made by her needle-work she intended to lay by towards paying her quarter's rent.

Oh! that dreaded rent-day, with no ready money to meet it, how it haunted the mind of the poor young widow,

sleeping or waking! To be sure Mr. Miller, her landlord, was "The mildest-mannered man alive," and she had feared him less than all her creditors. But still Amy had seen too much of life and character to draw any very confident conclusions from mere manner.

And so not without just reason she tormented herself with the question—Should the next rent-day find her without money to meet the just demands of her landlord, what might he not do? He might, if he chose, seize and sell all her goods and chattels, and turn her and her children into the street to starve or beg.

Amy shuddered at the bare possibility, and worked more diligently than ever, deeming that no toil, however hard, could be too great to be undertaken to save her children from such a fate.

But Amy Wynne was sinking under her accumulated burdens. The combined effects of anxiety, close confinement to the house, incessant needle-work, insufficient food, and the draft made upon her constitution by the nursing of the two children—all acting at once upon an organization originally very delicate, were pressing Amy towards her grave. She wasted thinner. Her fevers came in earlier and lasted longer each day. She continued her cheap regimen of bread and tea; and on Sundays only she indulged in a little meat. Every morning, when breakfast was over, the teapot was filled with water and set on the top of the stove, and during the day Amy, when she felt feverish, thirsty and weak, and ready to sink with exhaustion, took a cup of this overdrawn tea, which fitfully satisfied her thirst, and seemingly renewed her strength. But as she took it without milk or sugar, which she could not afford to use so freely, it was but a pure nervous stimulant, which in the end did her more harm than good.

She coughed but little during the day; but as soon as she lay down at night the cough commenced and racked her fragile frame at intervals until the morning.

Her little son knew not much of his mother's sufferings during the day. Her patience, her courage and her cheerfulness misled him as much as did her sparkling eyes and crimson cheeks and lips.

But at night, while Amy lay awake coughing in one room, Owen lay listening and grieving in the other. Often he would rise and go to her door and say:

"Mother dear, what is the matter? Can I do any thing for you? May I come in?"

But between her paroxysms of coughing, Amy would answer:

"It is only my cough; I shall get over it presently. You can't do any thing for me, dear. Go back to bed, Owen."

And she would try to smother her cough under the bedclothes, least it should distress her little son.

And he would return to his bed and lie there, with the silent tears trickling down his cheeks, listening and watching until "tired nature's sweet restorer" pressed his eyelids down in forgetfulness.

It was on a fine afternoon about this time that Mrs. Morley paid her promised visit. She entered the shop while Owen was standing behind the counter waiting for customers. She spoke cheeringly to the lad; asked him after his mother; bought a bottle of aromatic salts to encourage the business, and then passed on to the little back parlor to look for Amy.

The young mother had just finished nursing her own child and had laid it in the cradle, which she was slowly rocking with her foot, while she was holding the other babe to her bosom. Her face was more wasted than ever before; her cheeks were hollow and crimsoned, and her eyes were unnaturally bright with the consuming fever that was feeding on her vitals. Her needle-work lay in a basket on the stand ready to be snatched up in an instant.

Mrs. Morley positively recoiled in dismay.

What a picture of an overtasked life did the poor young widowed mother present, as she sat there with her fevered frame between the cradle and the work-stand, rocking one child, nursing another, and glancing eagerly at her sewing as though she felt she had no time to lose.

Amy arose nervously to meet her visitor; laid patient Little May, only half satisfied, in the foot of the cradle; arranged her own disordered dress and held out her hand to Mrs. Morley, saying:

"I am very glad to see you out this fine afternoon, ma'am."

"Thank you, my dear. But what is the matter with you? Have you been ill?" inquired the old lady, as she slowly sank into the chair that Amy had set for her.

"Oh, no! It is only my old cough that has been a little aggravated by a cold I took during the hard weather. It will wear off in the spring. It always does," said Amy, with a smile, as she resumed her seat.

"How are you getting along, my dear?"

"Oh, better than we could expect! The little shop is doing quite well for a beginning."

"Do you clear expenses, my dear?"

"Well, no, not yet; but we hope to do so. Besides, I have a good deal of needle-work."

"Do you take in needle-work?"

"Oh, yes, gladly, whenever I can get it to do," said Amy, lifting the garment that was on hand from the work-basket, and handing it to Mrs. Morley.

"And is this a specimen of your work, my dear?" said the old lady, examining critically the fine tucking of the cambric skirt, for that was the article in question.

"Yes, madam. It is a part of Miss Mim's wedding outfit I have a dozen of them to make."

"All tucked like these?"

"All tucked as much; but each in a different style."

"It is beautiful sewing! beautiful! How much does she give you a-piece for making these?"

"Fifty cents."

Mrs. Morley stared.

Amy smiled.

"How long does it take you to make one of these skirts?" asked the old lady.

"I can make one in two days, by rising early and sitting up late," said Amy.

"It is shameful!"

"Oh, dear Mrs. Morley, don't let us commence the old plaint of poor needlewomen's wages! It will do no good. It can't be helped, I do suppose," said Amy, with a smile.

"But, Amy, my dear child, you are not strong enough to confine yourself to sewing at all."

"But it is necessary that I should work," said Amy.

"For such a mere pittance! It will take you a month to finish this dozen of tucked cambric skirts. And then you will have but six dollars."

"If I did not do them, I should have nothing."

"But it is killing you. You are discounting your life to get a present living; if it *is* a living, which I doubt."

"It is necessary," repeated Amy.

"Well, if it really *is* necessary for you to take in needlework, I can give you some, my dear, and give you fair pay."

"Oh, I shall thank you so much!" said Amy, gratefully.

"I always used to make up all my husband's and my son's shirts; but, lately, they fancy that it hurts me; and so, whether I like to do it or no, they won't let me. Why, my dear, I daren't be caught at work. And what with their watching over me, and taking me out for airings, and coddling me in various ways, I haven't time to mend my own gloves. I haven't, indeed. And, now, I have a dozen of shirts for my husband, and another dozen for my son, to be made up, and you shall make them, if you please."

"Oh, I shall be so glad to do so!"

"The minister's shirts are to be all ruffled. He likes to

wear them as he wore them in his young days; and I can't blame him."

"Oh, no! I used to know some old gentlemen, in New York, who always wore ruffled-shirts," said Amy, smiling.

"Yes. Well, my dear, how long will it take you to make a ruffled shirt?"

"I can make one very easily in two days."

"Without sitting up late?"

"Oh, dear, yes!"

"Well, then, my dear, I will give you a dollar a-piece for making the ruffled-shirts."

"Oh, thank you, Mrs. Morley! that is very liberal."

"Not at all. It is what everybody should give. And now—my son's shirts are only plaited. How long will it take you to make one of them?"

"Only a day."

"Without sitting up late?"

"N–no. I shall have to work after candle-light."

"Well, then, I will give you seventy-five cents a-piece for them. Will that pay you?"

"Oh, abundantly! I shall be so much obliged to you, dear Mrs. Morley."

"Not at all, I say. I shall only be giving you a fair price for good work."

During this time, little May had been stretching out her arms, trying to rise from the cradle, and crowing persuasively.

But Amy was too much occupied to observe her. And now, therefore, she set up a piteous wail.

Amy immediately took her up and put her to her bosom.

"Why, my dear Mrs. Wynne, you do not surely nurse that child in your feeble state of health?" exclaimed Mrs. Morley.

"Oh, yes; how could I possibly wean her? It would seem so hard to make any difference between them!" said Amy, tenderly.

"'Any difference between *them*?' Between *whom*?" inquired the minister's wife, with perplexity.

"Between this and my own child," replied Amy.

"But is not *that* your own child?"

"Oh, no, ma'am. This is the *other* little babe. There is mine asleep in the cradle."

"But—you never mean to say that you have got that strange baby in the house yet and are nursing both?" said Mrs. Morley, in astonishment.

"Oh, yes. I cannot help it."

"Well, I hope the child's friends pay you," said Mrs. Morley, expressing the very same thought that had been expressed by Mr. Lacy.

"The child has no friends as far as I know, Mrs. Morley."

"Now, Mrs. Wynne! Do you really mean to tell me that in your feeble health and with your little means, you are burdening yourself with the care and support of that child?"

The tears filled Amy's eyes. She had been as much criticized and blamed for her care of the outcast infant as if the act had been a sin instead of a good deed; and she answered nervously:

"I *can't* help it! How can I, Mrs. Morley? The unfortunate babe was left on my hands. There is no one but me to take care of her. If any one else would adopt the babe and do a better part by her than I can do, I should be very glad both on her account and on my own. But no one comes forward to take the babe, and I have no alternative but to keep her."

"Amy, my dear," said the old lady, in a gentler tone, "You could send her to the asylum."

"That is, to the almshouse."

"Yes, there is a ward there for the reception of foundlings."

"I could not send her there, Mrs. Morley. It is certain

that they have never raised a child in that ward. And besides Owen is so fond of her, that it would half break his heart to have her sent there. No," said Amy, looking pitifully down on the child and speaking as to her—"No, Lily May. I will not send Owen's Lily May to the almshouse."

"Lily—*what?*" demanded Mrs. Morley rather sharply, for she was half provoked with what she mentally called Amy's whim of keeping the outcast child when she might send it to the asylum.

"Lily May," said Amy, smiling. "Her name is Mary, and we called her first Little Mary, and then Little May. But Owen calls her Lily May."

"And what is your own child named?"

"Gladys; we call her by the abbreviative of that name. We call her Gay, and Little Gay. But Owen calls her Lily Gay. You see," said Amy, deprecatingly, "Owen dotes on his two little sisters, and Lily May and Lily Gay are his fond names for them."

"His two little sisters! Why, my dear Mrs. Wynne, you surely have not adopted the little stranger to bring it up as your own, entirely! You have no idea what a burden it will be to you. A burden that will grow heavier and heavier every year."

"I cannot tell; I do not know. 'Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof," said Amy.

"But, my dear woman, be persuaded. Send the child to the asylum. You are not able either in health or in purse to charge yourself with the support of it."

"If any good Christian will come forward and adopt Little May, I will give her up; not otherwise."

"Amy, Amy, you give your friends little encouragement to help you."

"The Lord will provide," replied Amy.

"But *why* are you so *determined* on the subject of keeping this child?"

Tears stood in Amy's eyes to be so badgered by the well-meaning old lady. At first she could not speak; but presently she lifted her head with gentle dignity and answered reverently:

"Why do I persist in keeping this child?—Because our dear Saviour has said: 'Whoso receiveth *one* such little child in my name, receiveth me.'"

The minister's wife was rebuked and silenced. She could find no answer to make to this.

On the contrary, when she arose to take leave, she held Amy's hand within her own for a few moments while she said:

"Amy, my dear, not according to worldly prudence, but according to the highest Christian principles, I believe you are right, and the Lord will bless you."

"Dear Mrs. Morley," said Amy, deprecatingly, "I could no more send Little May to the almshouse than I could send my own child. I sometimes wish that I could really love her as well as I love my own; that seems impossible; but I try to make no difference in the treatment of the children. And I have a sort of presentiment that if I am good to this poor little motherless child, the Lord will greatly bless my own children; will care for them—*after I am gone.*"

"The Lord will protect you, and all yours, my dear. But do not talk of leaving your children. You will be spared to them many years, I hope."

"I hope so, too," said Amy, smiling.

CHAPTER XVI.

VISITORS.

Along her cheek the deepening red
Told where the feverish hectic fed,
And yet each fatal token gave
To the mild beauty of her face
A nearer and a dearer grace,
Unwarning of the grave.—*Whittier.*

Owen let Mrs. Morley out, and then entered the back parlor, where his mother still sat with little May on her lap.

As the door between the parlor and the shop had been left open, Owen had heard enough of the conversation between his mother and her visitor to enable him to understand something of its purport. Wherever Little May and the security of her shelter in the home-nest was concerned, Owen's faculties were all on the alert. He was the little champion for the helpless child. He now approached his mother, put his arm around her neck, and stood looking fondly down upon the babe on her lap, and whispered softly:

"Mother, dear, I heard what Mrs. Morley was trying to persuade you to do. But you won't, will you? You will never send poor Lily May away, will you, mother, dear?"

"No, never, my darling. If there was no other reason for keeping her, I would do it for your sake. Do you think mother would send any thing away you love, Owen, even if it was a kitten? Don't be frightened for your pet, my dear. She shall share yours and your sister's home as long as I live to keep one over your heads. And if I cannot love her quite as well as I love my own children, I will at least take as good care of her," said Amy.

The ringing of the shop bell interrupted the conversation.

Owen hastily kissed his mother, and ran in to wait upon the customer.

No, Amy could not love the little outcast as she loved her own children. It was perhaps neither natural nor possible that she should. But Amy was unconscious how much this difference of feeling influenced her actions towards them.

She thought she treated the children with strict impartiality. And in some respects she did so. She divided the pap or the broth that was made for them equally between them. She made for each the same number of slips, caps and socks. She dressed them exactly alike. During the day both occupied the same cradle at her feet. And at night both slept in the same crib beside her bed.

In short, the children were fed, clothed and lodged with a strict regard to "even-handed justice." But when both woke up hungry at the same moment, it was *always* Little Gay who was caught up laughing, leaping and crowing on her mother's lap—was pressed to that mother's bosom closest and held there the longest, while the fondest caresses and the brightest smiles were lavished upon her. And meanwhile Little May was left in the cradle to suck her fists and wait her turn to be taken up; when Amy, worn out for the time by her own idolized child, would have nothing for the little alien but an exhausted bosom and a tired countenance.

When their dresses were cut out, if the patterns fell short, and one of the garments had to be scant, it was sure to be Little May's. When they shared the same cradle it was Little May who had to sleep at the foot. When they lay in the same crib at night, it was Little Gay who lay on the side next her mother. So in a hundred unconcious ways Amy betrayed the difference in her feelings between her own child, whom she tenderly loved and proudly delighted in, and the little alien, whom she only pitied and tolerated.

Young as these children were—scarcely seven months old—the effects of this difference in treatment began to be visible in them.

Gay was a joyous, dancing, romping little tyrant, who, when awake, could not be kept still for an instant; who, when displeased, squalled angrily and importunately; who would strike her brother in the face just as quickly as she would kiss him; and who did all these things, not from perversity or ill-nature, but from exuberance of life and baby wilfulness.

May was the opposite of all this. She was meek, patient, sensitive. When awake she would lie long in the cradle, making no complaints, she was so used to be so left. She seldom laughed; but when she was pleased, a sweet, intense smile would deepen the dimples in her pretty mouth and half close her violet eyes. She seldom cried; but when she was hurt, her little under-lip would tremble and her eyes swim with tears. She had a wistful way of watching the eyes of those around her—and no one knows how much she was affected by their expression—if it was loving, with what comfort; if it was otherwise, with what pain! It seems a dreadful thing to say; but really it appeared that the very first impression this poor babe received in life was that she had no right to be there at all. That she was where she was by sufferance only. Yes! long before the poor infant could have possibly *known* her alien state in this family, she *felt* it, and it saddened the dawn of her life.

Owen saw all this, and while it deepened his pity for the helpless child, it also increased his love for her. He showed this in many ways, and most frequently in the pet names he called her. "The other poor little sister." "Lily May." "Owen's Lily May."

And among all the faces that were around her, the only one into which Little May looked with perfect love and perfect trust was that of Owen. As the eyes of other in-

fants seek first the face of their mother, so the eyes of Little May sought the face of Owen !—that face which was never turned on her except in the deepest pity, the tenderest love, or the brightest smiles.

Owen could not at once forget the visit and the advice of Mrs. Morley. It still gave him a vague feeling of uneasiness. Not but that he fully trusted his mother's promise that Little May should not be sent away. Owen could neither understand nor overcome the anxiety he felt on this subject.

On a fine morning later in the same week, Amy dressed herself to return Mrs. Morley's visit. She also told Nancy to get ready to carry Little Gay, as she intended to take the child with her for an airing. As both children could not be taken, it was of course Little Gay's right to have the preference.

Owen and Little May were to remain at home.

When the party were ready to set out—Amy in her well-preserved and neat-looking widow's weeds; Nancy in her gray cloth cloak and brown silk bonnet; and Little Gay in the fine Berlin wool mantle given by Mr. Lacy—Owen came up to his mother's side.

"Mother dear," he said.

"What is it, Owen?"

"You will not let Mrs. Morley persuade you to send Lily May away, will you?"

"No, Owen. I told you I would not. Rely on my word, love," said Amy.

"Oh, I do, mother, I do! But I *know* she will try to persuade you, mother dear! Oh, I wish she would let poor Lily May alone. It is so cruel to go against a poor little thing like her who can't speak for herself."

"Don't be uneasy, Owen dear. No one shall ever persuade me to send away my Owen's Lily May," said Amy, as she kissed him tenderly and stepped out upon the sidewalk, where Nancy already stood with Little Gay in her

arms—Little Gay, who was clapping her hands and crowing and jumping with impatience to be off.

Owen stood for a moment in the shop door watching them walk up the street towards the parsonage.

It was indeed a lovely day. Still early in February, yet with the weather of May. The frost had disappeared more than a week before. The ground was dry, the sky was clear, the sun brilliant, the air balmy. A good many of the villagers were out walking to enjoy the beauty of the day. Many of the country people were also in the village shopping. Mr. Lacy's shop over the way seemed quite thronged with customers. Altogether, the village presented a gay scene.

"Poor Lily May!" said Owen, tenderly. "If I could only leave the shop, I would take her out in the pleasant sunshine."

As he looked up and down the street at the gay passengers, he noticed a lady and gentleman walking on the opposite side of the way. He noticed them particularly; first, because they were strangers, and strangers were very rare in Rogues' Harbor; and secondly, because there was something really singularly distinguished and interesting in their appearance. The gentleman was a tall, noble and aristocratic-looking man, with a fine head, classic features, fair complexion, and light auburn hair and moustache. He wore the usual gray blouse and hat adopted by gentlemen on long journeys. The lady wore a dress and mantle of fine checked black and white shepherd's plaid, and a straw bonnet trimmed very plainly with black and white ribbon. But within that simple bonnet what a sweet face! a fair, delicate face, contrasting its pearly whiteness of complexion with the blackest hair and the darkest eyes; a face beaming with quiet happiness.

Owen could not help gazing at them until they turned into Lacy's shop. Then he, Owen, turned into the house and went into the back parlor.

Little May was in the cradle. She had contrived to kick off one little crimson sock, and was now holding up her naked foot in both hands and gazing at it as though she considered it some wonderful production of nature. All unconscious was Little May of her own hard fate in being left in the cradle in the back parlor, while the other baby was taken out for an airing. It was not likely that she would feel troubled by *that*. Little May looked for all her pleasures and received all her hurts from other people's *eyes*. She greeted Owen's return with a crow of delight, and threw up both hands and both feet by way of welcome.

Owen smiled on her and knelt down by the cradle and began to caress her and talk to her as was his custom. Only this time his talk partook of his anxiety as well as of his tenderness:

"Never mind, Lily May; if everybody in the world leaves you, Owen never will. Never, Lily May. Owen will stay with you and keep you with him as long as ever he lives. Owen's hands and feet will work for you, Lily May—"

"Goo!" crowed the baby, caressing his face with her soft fingers.

"And when Owen grows to be a tall man and makes a fortune, Lily May, you shall go to school and learn to be a lady. And you shall always be Owen's sister, just as much as Gay, and Owen never will make any difference between you—never, Lily May!"

"Goo!" crowed the baby, kicking out both feet in delight, as if she might understand a "comfort" in the words, if not the words.

"I would like to take you out for a walk, Lily May; but I have got to mind the shop. Stop! I know what I'll do," said Owen, suddenly breaking off—"I'll put your little mantle on and walk you up and down before the shop door, and then if any one comes, I can slip in and wait on them."

So saying this, Owen took Little May out of the cradle; put on her discarded socks; put on her mantle; and carried her out to the sidewalk before the shop; where he began to walk her up and down—*she* so sensitive to external influences, fairly panting and gasping with rapture to be out in the bright sunshine and fresh air, among the gayly-dressed passengers of the street. Every minute her little finger was stretched out and her little mouth pursed up calling Owen's attention to some object in the street that attracted her notice. And Owen delighted with *her* delight would lend himself entirely to the play.

He carried her on one arm; with one of her little arms she clasped his neck, while the other was continually extended in the manner I have said.

Suddenly Little May clasped his neck with a tighter clasp, gave a great leap and crying eagerly, "Oo! oo!" pointed across the street.

Owen looked and saw the strange gentleman and lady who had before attracted his attention. They were now coming out of Lacy's shop and turning as if they would cross the street. They were perfect strangers to Owen.

"We must go in, Lily May! There are two customers Mr. Lacy has sent us!" said Owen, gayly, as he carried Little May into the shop. He sat her down on the counter, and told her to keep still while he waited on the lady and gentleman, who were now coming into the shop. And then he went behind the counter and stood ready.

"Show us some combs and brushes, suitable for a lady's use," said the gentleman, coming up to the counter.

"Oh! what a lovely little creature!" exclaimed the lady, going straight up to the child.

"Goo!" said Little May, taking up the tassels of her new cloak and holding them up to the lady's view.

With one eye on his "Lily May" and the other on his business, Owen opened the show-case, and took out several

different patterns of hair-brushes—all suitable for a lady's use, he explained.

"Come, love, here are the brushes; make your selection," said the gentleman.

She, unwillingly, tore herself away from the lovely child, and she very carelessly tumbled over the articles submitted to her inspection.

"Oh, any will do! They are all very nice!" she said, hastily singling out two of the best brushes and putting them aside.

In doing so her eyes fell on the face of Owen, and became fixed there. She stared at the boy a full minute, until indeed he was forced to drop his eyes in embarrassment. Whereupon she recovered her self-possession, and turning to her husband she whispered:

"Did you ever, in all your life, see such a likeness as that boy bears to my dear, lost father?"

"Never. I observed it myself."

"What is your name, my boy?" she inquired.

"Owen Wynne, madam," answered the lad, bowing and blushing

"Ah! no possible chance of a relationship! I almost fancied there might be when I saw such a strong resemblance. My dear, do you recollect that portrait of my dear father as a boy of ten years of age? It is the exact counterpart of this lad," said the lady.

"Yes, it is! But, my dear, hurry with your purchases, or we *may* miss the steamboat, and have to stop in this dull place two days longer, which would not be agreeable," answered the gentleman.

The lady selected what farther articles she stood in need of, and told Owen to put them up in a parcel.

While the boy was occupied in doing so, the lady turned once more to the infant, seated on the counter. She raised it to its feet, and the child began to spring and dance and crow, as children under such conditions will.

"Oh! what a dear little love! Oh, look! *do* look! she isn't at all afraid of me! Look how she leaps and laughs! *do* look!—What is her name, my boy?" she said, suddenly breaking off to question Owen.

"Lily May, madam."

"Lily May! what a pretty name! Dear, her name is Lily May. Look at her. Oh, *do* look! You *won't* look!" she said, half pleadingly, half pettishly, as she played with the child and danced her up and down and let her pull at the white roses in her bonnet. "You *won't* look at her!"

"Yes, I will, my dear! or rather I would if we had time. Yes, she is a pretty, confiding little creature; but we cannot stop to play with her! The boat, you know, is expected every minute, and never stops longer than to land passengers and freight. And we must get back to the hotel, in time to secure our passage. Is the parcel ready, my boy?"

"Yes, sir—it is large. I could take it for you in about an hour's time," said Owen.

"Oh, I cannot wait, but I can easily take it with me. How much do these articles amount to?"

"Four dollars and a quarter, sir."

The gentleman put down the money.

"Thank you, sir," said Owen.

"Come, love," said the customer, taking up the parcel and preparing to leave the shop.

His wife slipped her hand through his arm, and they started. But when they got to the door, she suddenly rushed back, caught the babe up in her arms, strained it to her bosom, covered its face with kisses, and then set it down again, exclaiming, between smiles and tears:

"I could not help it. She is such a captivating little creature."

Then taking her purse from her pocket, she drew from it a broad twenty dollar gold piece, and laid it on the counter, saying:

"There, my boy! I want you to get a present with this

money for the baby.—No, now, don't be too proud to take it from a stranger. I had a dear little baby of my own once. If she had lived she would have been about as old as this little one. For my baby's sake I want to give this little one something. Take it. Your mother will know how to spend it for her."

"There, my dear, listen! There is the steamer!" exclaimed the gentleman, as the sound of a steamboat blowing off her steam was heard.

They both hurried from the shop.

CHAPTER XVII.

SURPRISES.

He who hath never warred with misery,
Nor ever tugged with trouble and distress,
Hath had no time nor any chance to try
The strength and forces of his worthiness;
Those parts of character which felicity
Keeps close concealed, affliction must express,
And only men in their extremity
Prove what they are—what their ability.—*Daniel.*

When Amy returned, she found Owen at the shop-desk and Lily May perched upon the counter.

Amy greeted her little son as though she had been absent a week.

"And what luck have you had since I have been gone, my dear?" she inquired, after she had kissed him.

"Only one customer, mother dear. But such a one! and so fond of Lily May! See what a present she gave her?" said Owen, taking the broad gold piece from the baby's hands and showing it to his mother.

"A present, Owen! For her? This?" said Amy, taking the coin in her hand and looking at it.

"Yes, mother dear; but Lily May will divide it with her

little sister. Won't you, Lily May?" inquired Owen, speaking as the child's guardian and trustee.

The baby crowed and jumped by way of expressing her perfect agreement with any measure that Owen might propose, whether she understood it or not.

"But who gave her this?" inquired Amy.

"The strange lady, mother dear. Such a lovely lady! And oh, she made so much of her! And kissed her so! You never saw any thing like it!"

"A strange lady—a lovely lady—making much of Lily May! Owen, come into the back parlor. I must hear something more about this," said Amy, thoughtfully.

Owen took his pet from the counter and followed his mother.

"Nancy, give me Lily Gay, and take my bonnet and mantle up stairs and put them away," said Amy, as she sank down in her low chair and began to take off her wrappings.

Nancy obeyed orders. And as soon as she was gone from the room Amy turned to her son, who had seated himself on a stool with Lily May on his knees, and said:

"Now, Owen, tell me all about this lady's visit."

Owen told all he knew, from the moment of his first catching sight of this strange lady and gentleman to the moment of their departure from the shop.

"Owen, I—half suspect that lady and gentleman were the parents of Lily May," said Amy, hesitatingly.

"Oh, mother!" exclaimed the boy, turning white and red, and pressing the pet closer to his bosom.

"I *do*, Owen. Did they ask many questions about the child?"

"No, mother dear. Only one, I think. What her name was."

"Owen, tell me how they looked, and what they said, and what they did."

"I *did*, mother dear."

"But tell me *all*."

"I did tell you, mother."

"Tell me again, Owen."

Owen went over the whole story once more.

"I don't know," mused Amy, "if they *were* the parents of the child, *she*, at least, must have known her own baby; and if she did, there could have been no reason in the world why she should not have claimed it on the spot. It is very strange. But perhaps it was just as she said, that she had lost a child, who, if it had lived, would have been of this one's age; and hence her interest in this one. Did you tell them she was not your own little sister?"

"Oh no, mother dear! I couldn't bear to disown poor Lily May in that way. And they never asked me any questions about her except her name."

"Well, I don't know what to make of it. But I will go to the hotel and find out who they are; and that may throw some light on the subject. Owen, run up-stairs and bring down my bonnet and mantle again."

Owen put his pet in the cradle and went to do as he was bid. He returned, bringing the required articles, and followed by Nancy, scolding:

"Now, Miss Amy, you're not agwine out ag'in to-day!"

"Yes, Nancy; I must go, on business."

"Once is 'nough. Once 'ud do you good; twice is too much; twice 'ud do you harm. Take my 'vice; stay where you is; let Marse Owen go."

"No, Nancy; on this occasion I must go myself. The distance is not far, and I shall be back within the hour. Have supper ready against I come, Nancy," said Amy, as she hastily gave her babe into the woman's arms, and began to put on her bonnet and shawl.

Amy was soon ready, and out of the house, and walking as rapidly as her failing breath would permit towards the Elm Tree Inn

The sun was setting as she passed into the private entrance, and inquired for the landlady.

She was shown into the parlor, where she was immediately joined by Mrs. Potts, the hostess—a short, round-bodied, rosy little woman, who rolled into the room, holding out both hands, smiling, and exclaiming:

"Well, now, Mrs. Wynne, my dear, this is a surprise and a pleasure, and I am so glad to see you, and how do you find yourself, and how did you leave the little folks at home? And, Sam, do you go and make a port-wine negus, and fetch it here, with some biscuits, directly, and let them be good. And I hope, now that you have broken the ice, you will come often, my dear Mrs. Wynne."

All this was spoken breathlessly, without pause, as she advanced, and caught Amy's hands, and shook them cordially.

"I thank you very much, Mrs. Potts," said Amy, earnestly. "I came to inquire about some guests of yours who were at our place to-day."

"Oh, yes, a young lady and gentleman."

"Yes."

"They were a young couple, just married, I think, going on their bridal tour, I believe," said the landlady, without pause, as usual.

"Young couple, recently married, and on their bridal tour?"

"I believe so."

"And where did they come from? and where were they going?"

"I don't know more than the dead."

"Perhaps your husband or some of your people may know."

"I don't think they do, but I will ask," said the landlady, rising and leaving the room.

After an absence of ten minutes she returned, followed by the waiter, Sam, with a tray of refreshments

"They came by the stage-coach. They went away by the Baltimore boat. And their name is Powers. And that is all any one here knows about them. And now will you take some wine negus and biscuits after your walk, my dear Mrs. Wynne?" said the landlady, in the same breathless strain.

Always hungry and always thirsty, poor Amy very gladly availed herself of this invitation, and ate and drank, and was refreshed and comforted.

And as it was growing dark, Amy thanked her kind hostess, and arose to take her leave.

"Come again, my dear Mrs. Wynne, and come often; drop in whenever you are going by and rest yourself and get a bite and sup, for we shall be very glad to see you, because you haven't got no sincerer well-wisher in the village than I am. I know what it is to be a lone widow myself. I am not forty years old yet, and I have been a widow twice, and may be a widow twice more for ought I know, for we are born but not buried, and nobody knows what a day may bring forth."

So, twaddling on, the good little woman rolled out alongside of Amy until they reached the private entrance, at which Sam, the waiter, stood with an old-fashioned gig and horse drawn up before the door.

"I knew it was too late and too long a walk for you to go on foot, my dear; so I told Sam to put Chally to the shay and take you home, and you needn't say a word, because it's no inconvenience at all," said Mrs. Potts, as Amy attempted to thank her.

"Stop at Mr. Lacy's store, if you please," said Amy to the driver, who, accordingly, drove straight to Lacy's and stopped.

Amy got out and went in.

The store was lighted up for the evening, but there were no customers in. The proprietor stood alone behind the counter.

People like those upon whom they have heaped benefits.

Good-hearted Lacy liked poor Amy now more than he ever had before. And he bent across the counter gladly and kindly greeted her.

"I came, Mr. Lacy," she said, "to inquire if you know who those strangers are whom you sent over to our shop this afternoon."

"No, indeed; I do not know even their names. They were strangers in the town; stopping, I believe, at the Elm Tree Inn."

"Yes, I know that much. And—you can tell me no more?"

"Nothing more whatever. But—excuse me for asking the question; I do it, not from idle curiosity, but from real interest—why do you wish to know anything about them?"

"Ah!" said Amy, smiling deprecatingly. "It might only have been a woman's fancy; but I hoped that they were something to the poor babe that was left so strangely on my hands."

"But—pardon me again!—why should you have hoped so?"

"They called while I was absent, and no one but Owen and the child were left at home. And the lady made much of her and gave her a twenty dollar gold piece. Now, ladies don't drop broad golden coins into the laps of strange infants."

"I don't know. That depends. Please tell me all about it."

Amy gave a brief sketch of the lady's and gentleman's visit to the shop.

"Oh, I dare say it is all right. And there was nothing more in the affair than appears. The visit was purely accidental on *their* part, madam. They came here to purchase articles that I do not keep for sale; and I sent them to your shop where they might be bought. The rest grew out of the child's beauty and the lady's benevolence. You

may depend that was all. If I were you, I would think no more of it, Mrs. Wynne. It will only worry you."

Amy thanked him and bade him good-night and left the store. At the door she dismissed the gig, and then she walked across the street to her own little home.

As she entered the shop she glanced over the show-cases on the counter. They were half empty. The stock was getting very low. The credit customers had not paid up. The fund accumulating to settle Mr. Lacy's account was very small. How was the stock to be renewed? How was Mr. Lacy to be paid? And, oh, above all, how was rent-day to be met? With a deep sigh Amy passed through the shop and entered the parlor.

The table was set. And the supper was ready to be placed upon it. The two little sisters were asleep in the cradle. And Nancy was nodding over the stove. Owen was nowhere to be seen.

"Where is my boy, Nancy?" inquired Amy.

"*Aw-oo-oo!*" yawned Nancy, opening an awful red chasm between her flat nose and round chin—"what you say, Miss Amy?"

"Where is Owen?"

"Oh! *he?* He done grow so fidgetty that nobody couldn't do nothing with him; all on your account. Last he clapped his hat on his head and runned out to look arter you. And bless patience here he comes now back again."

At this moment Owen entered breathless.

"My dear boy, where have you been?"

"I went to meet you, mother, to walk home with you. But when I got to the Elm Tree they told me you had come in the gig."

"My poor little protector!" said Amy, smiling tenderly on her boy.

Nancy set the supper on the table. Tea, bread and molasses; nothing more. But Amy was feverish, and

drank cup after cup of weak tea—to quench her thirst and keep her awake, for she had to sit up and sew late that night to make up for the time lost that day, she said.

After the frugal supper was over and the humble service was cleared away, Amy with her needle-work drew up to one side of the table and Owen with his books and slate to the other. The one tallow candle stood between them.

"Before you settle to your studies, Owen, I want you to tell me how much that case of fancy goods cost at the wholesale price."

"One hundred and twenty dollars, mother dear. But at the retail price, at the rate of thirty-three and a third per cent. profit, they are worth one hundred and eighty."

"Are they?—Well. And we owe Mr. Lacy one hundred and twenty?"

"Yes, mother dear."

"How much money have we got saved up towards paying him, Owen?"

"Ninety-two dollars cash, mother dear, and fifty-eight on our books. If the people would pay us, we would have one hundred and forty, and could pay Mr. Lacy all we owe him."

"Ah, yes, if the people would pay us, Owen; but they won't!"

"Then let us stop crediting them, mother dear; and sell what little stock we have left for cash only, and *then* we might *still* make enough to pay Mr. Lacy."

"Ah, Owen, but I told you before we cannot do that. While we have to ask credit, we cannot refuse it."

"Oh, mother, mother dear, it is so different, if you would but see it so. We go in debt a little to rich tradesmen for things that we can't do without, and we mean to pay sooner or later, and just as soon as we can. But those people who are on our books, mother, they go in debt to poor us, for things that they don't need and never mean to pay for. Oh, mother, please let me do a cash business for the future."

"I cannot, Owen. I cannot refuse credit to one person while I have to ask it of another," sighed Amy. And Owen was obliged to submit.

Amy had noticed how low the stock was as she passed through the shop that evening. It was in fact so low that another ten days saw the end of it. The last few articles were sold out on a certain busy Saturday when the village was full of country people who had come to do their shopping. And the very last article, a pretty dressing-case, had been sold to a credit customer.

At sunset Owen closed the shop door and went into the little back parlor where his mother sat bending over her needle-work, sewing fast, to finish a job that night.

"We may put up the shutters now, mother dear; the stock is all sold out," said Owen, half sadly, half smilingly.

Amy looked up amazingly from her work.

"Is it all gone, Owen?"

"All gone, mother dear."

"Have you taken in much money to-day, Owen?"

"Pretty well. About fourteen dollars."

"Now bring your books here and let us see how we stand."

Owen went and brought in his books and laid them open on the table before his mother. Passing his finger down the columns, he said, with a droll smile.

"Mother dear, we have come out even, you and I, without any profit and without any loss, except loss of time and labor. This is how we stand: We have a hundred and twenty dollars and twenty-five cents cash, and we have fifty-nine dollars and seventy-five cents on our books. So you see dear mother, that our credit customers have got all the profit of our business."

"It cannot be helped, Owen; perhaps they may pay us some time, little by little. Now take that hundred and twenty dollars and go right over and pay Mr. Lacy."

Owen went up-stairs to his mother's bureau drawer

where the money was kept and brought it down and took it over to Mr. Lacy.

The shop was full of Saturday evening customers and Mr. Lacy was very busy; but as soon as he had a moment's leisure, he turned to Owen and said:

"Well, my lad, what is it?"

"If you please, sir," said Owen, in a low voice, as he handed over the funds, "here is the hundred and twenty dollars we owed you for the fancy goods."

"Ha! why have you done so well as to be able to pay already? I did not expect this for a month or two to come," said Mr. Lacy, as he rapidly counted over the money

"It is right, I hope, sir?"

"Quite right, my boy. Wait until I give you a receipt," said Mr. Lacy, as he took a pen. And he rapidly wrote out an acknowledgment of the money, and handed it to Owen, who received it with a bow, and left the shop.

"Yes," said Owen, as he crossed the street, "poor mother's credit-customers have run off with all her profits. But, now that I have nothing to do, I will try to hunt them up a little!"

He entered his home with a smile.

"Well, mother dear, here is the receipt. Mr. Lacy was so pleased."

Amy looked up from her work.

"I am glad, oh, I am so glad to have paid him, Owen! Now he knows that his confidence was not misplaced. He knows that we are honest," she said.

"There is a quarter of a dollar left, mother dear. What shall I buy with it for to-morrow's dinner?" inquired the boy.

Amy reflected for a moment. It required thought to lay out that mite to advantage.

"Owen, you may get two pounds of cheap, lean beef, to make us some soup for to-morrow. And, then, the next

day we can hash the cold beef—so it will serve for two days."

Owen was off like a flash, and soon returned with his frugal marketing.

When he got back, Nancy had the supper ready—if the monotonous, wearying tea and bread and molasses could be called a supper. But neither mother nor son complained of their fare. On the contrary, both were grateful for it, and Amy asked a blessing on it. Owen ate his bread and molasses with a good appetite, and poor Amy drank cup after cup of tea with feverish avidity.

And when supper was over, she told Nancy to set the tea-pot on the stove, as she should want to drink it all through the evening to support her strength, as she had to sit up and sew until twelve o'clock.

Owen heard that with dismay. He implored his mother to leave off and go to bed. But in vain. Amy told him that she had promised to finish that dress that night, so that the owner could send for it and get it early the next morning to wear to church.

Then Owen begged to be permitted to sit up with his mother and read to her. But again he pleaded in vain. Amy would not allow him to tax his strength. She laid her commands on him to go to bed and go to sleep.

Ah, she might send her boy off to bed; but to sleep was not so easy a matter.

Owen lay awake watching until midnight, when his mother at last came up to her room.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE OLD LODGE.

"Is this the hall? The nettle buildeth bowers
Where spotted toad and beetle black are seen.
Are these the chambers? Fed by darkest showers,
The trailing worm hath o'er them crawling been.
Is this the home? The owlet's dreary cry
Unto that asking makes a dread reply."—*Nicol.*

THE following Monday was a sad day for the widow's little household. The shop had been closed, closed permanently, and Owen's business was gone. Nor was that all; for this was the dreaded rent-day, when twenty-five dollars would be due to the landlord for the quarter's rent. And Amy, with greatest industry and closest economy, had been able to make but twelve dollars towards paying the debt. She arose that morning full of fears, and so nervous that she could scarcely swallow the tea and bread that had been got ready for her.

As this was the regular day for going to Mr. Spicer's grocery-store to get the week's provisions, immediately after breakfast Owen put on his little cloak and hat, and took the basket and the order that his mother had written, and set out to bring them.

Amy took her sewing, and sat down in her low chair beside the children's cradle, and tried to settle herself to work. But every noise startled her. Every ring at the door-bell made her heart beat.

Nancy cleared away the breakfast service, and then went out to kindle a fire in the kitchen, to do the week's washing there.

Amy grew more and more nervous as the morning advanced.

Owen came back from the grocery-store with his basket, thanks to Mr. Spicer's goodness, full as ever.

Amy arose, with a smile and a sigh, half pleased to have the provisions, half remorseful to have sent for them.

"I feel as if I had stolen them, Owen!" she said, as she put them away in the cupboard.

"Oh, mother dear! If you only would believe how willing Mr. Spicer is to trust us! And what heavy weight and heaping measure he gives us! *He* don't feel as if we were stealing the things, mother!" replied the boy, as he warmed his hands at the stove.

Amy resumed her needle-work and her nervous watching for the landlord. And Owen, having well warmed himself, set out again for the woods to examine his trap and to gather sticks.

Amy sat on, sewing fast, watching anxiously, and drinking tea at intervals to keep up her strength.

Owen came back with a load of sticks and started again. And he made many errands in the course of the day and stocked the wood-shed well with fuel.

The day passed, but no landlord came.

At dusk Nancy lighted the candle and put the frugal supper on the table. And Amy sat down with the feeling of a condemned criminal who had been reprieved from death for one day longer.

When supper was over and the service cleared away, and the candle snuffed and placed upon the table, Amy drew up on one side with her needle-work and Owen on the other with his books and slate.

But on this evening Owen could not confine his mind to study. Something in his mother's wan face awakened his anxiety. Presently he pushed his books from him and went into the kitchen, where Nancy was busy washing up the dishes.

"I say, Nancy," he whispered, "what is the matter with my mother? Is she ill?"

"Ill? No; what makes you think so?"

"Oh, Nancy! she is *so* thin! I was looking at her to-

night, as she sat there sewing. I am sure she gets thinner every day. Oh, Nancy! don't deceive me! tell me the truth! *Is* there any thing much the matter with my dear mother?" he asked, in a pleading voice.

"Hi! what I tell you, boy! Think I gwine tell you a false? No, there ain't nothing much the matter with your ma."

"But, oh, Nancy, she coughs so much in the night! And she moans so in her sleep. I creep to her door sometimes and listen."

"Well then you better be laying in your bed and taking of your own rest, than prowling about all hours of the night after your ma. There ain't nothing much the matter with her," said Nancy, who knew better, but who took this means of quieting what she considered useless anxiety on the part of the boy.

Owen looked at her wistfully and did not seem half satisfied.

"Your ma ought to stop sewing and stop nussing them babies. And she ought to go out more and eat more meat," added Nancy.

"Oh, if she could! if she only could!" sighed the boy.

But just then the shop bell rang sharply.

Owen sprang up and ran to answer it. As he passed through the back parlor on his way to the shop he glanced uneasily at his mother.

The work had dropped from her hands and she was looking up breathlessly, with her face blanched as white as death.

"See who it is," she gasped.

Owen hurried to open the door.

And Amy's strained ears caught the words:

"Is your mother in?"

It was the voice of her landlord that spoke. And Amy's heart almost died within her.

"Yes, sir; mother is in. Will you walk into the parlor?" said Owen, ushering the landlord in.

A burly man of the "bluff King Hal" order—big, fat, fair, with a broad face, a double chin, and—an eye to the main chance.

Amy could not rise to receive him. Fear had deprived her of muscular power. At first she could not even speak. She could only motion her visitor to seat himself in the chair that Owen placed for his accommodation.

Mr. Miller sat down, wiped his big face with a bright red handkerchief, and opened his business—opened it rather brusquely.

"I called about the rent, Mrs. Wynne."

"Yes, sir," faltered Amy.

"You know that it is due to-day."

"Yes, sir."

The landlord took the bill from his pocket and laid it before her.

She mechanically raised it and looked. It was receipted in full.

"I am very sorry—" she began, but her voice died away in silence, and she dropped her head and covered her face with her hand.

The landlord watched her and waited for her to speak. But apparently she could not do so. And Owen came forward. Modestly but distinctly he spoke:

"Mr. Miller, mother has paid you *two* quarters' rent and she doesn't owe you but *one* now. And she has got nearly half the money to pay that. So if you will please to take what she has got, which is twelve dollars, and give us a little time to pay the balance, we will certainly pay it."

Mr. Miller looked at the manly little fellow, half in surprise and half in approbation, and then turned to his mother and asked:

"Madam, is this so?"

"Yes;" said Amy, lifting her head and feeling encouraged

by the support of her little son—"It is just as he has stated it. And if you will be so good as to take the sum that I have in hand and wait for the rest—"

"But what are your prospects for paying the rest, Mrs. Wynne?" interrupted the landlord.

Amy was silenced and abashed. What indeed could she answer? What prospects had she of paying the balance?

Again Owen came to her relief.

"Mr. Miller, mother takes in sewing, and she saves up every cent she makes by her needle to pay her rent. And I shall get work soon. I know I shall, because I am trying everywhere; and Mr. Lacy is trying for me. And every cent I make I will save up to pay the rent."

"But my little man, you have other creditors besides me," said Mr. Miller.

"Yes, sir, we have other creditors; but they know mother's case and they do not press her," said Owen.

"Oh no, they do not press me; they are very, very kind to me. They will wait, so that you can have all the money we make until you are paid," added Amy.

Neither the mother nor the son intended any reproach in what they said. They knew that the claims of the landlord were just, and they fully acknowledged those claims. And yet Mr. Miller *felt* as though he had been upbraided; and so he hastened to defend himself.

"And neither do *I* wish to press you, Mrs. Wynne! But put yourself in my place for a moment, if you please; and consider my case. I paid a round sum for this house to begin with. And then I put two hundred dollars worth of repairs on it, when I let it to your husband. Then I have more money to pay out for taxes and for insurance. And for all this invested capital I have received but fifty dollars interest, for the half year! And for the present quarter, you offer me but twelve dollars! That is all very discouraging to a landlord, Mrs. Wynne."

"I am very sorry, sir," commenced Amy, but, between mortification and anxiety, her voice broke down.

"It is very discouraging to *mother*, Mr. Miller. You must see that it is. We are going to do the best we can for you, sir. We can do no more," said Owen, gravely.

Again Mr. Miller turned and smiled on the young champion, and then again addressed himself to Amy.

"I am not here to complain of you, and far less to press you, but simply to compromise with you, Mrs. Wynne."

"To compromise?" slowly repeated Amy.

"Yes, madam. I confess that when I came here this evening I had little expectation of receiving the full amount of the quarter's rent, or even the half of that amount. And when I spoke to you of a landlord's liabilities and rights I did it, not to press you, but to pave the way for the compromise I am about to propose."

"What is that, sir?" faltered Amy.

"Why, it is this: You took this house by the year. You have occupied it but three quarters. Your year will be up about the first of next June. Nor could I, whether you paid your rent or not, get you out of the house, against your will, before the expiration of that time. Now, the compromise I have come to offer you is this—that I will take whatever sum you may be able to give me for this quarter's rent, and in return give you a receipt in full of all demands, on condition that you will vacate the premises at once. Now, come! what do you say to this plan?"

Amy said nothing as yet. She was asking herself the question—Where could she go?

Again Owen became her spokesman.

"Why do you wish mother to leave so suddenly before her time is out? And in the winter, too, Mr. Miller?" he asked.

"Because, my boy, I have had a splendid offer for this house and shop, if I can give possession by the first of March. There is a young doctor who has heard of the

opening here, and wishes to come and settle among us And heaven knows we want him badly enough. He wishes to take the house occupied by the late Doctor Wynne, to whose practice he expects to succeed. So, Mrs. Wynne, if you will agree to my terms, you will greatly accommodate both me and the young doctor of whom I speak."

"I should be very glad to do so," said Amy, hesitatingly, "but, in fact, I do not know where, at this season of the year, I could possibly go. I do not suppose that there is a house, or even a room, to be let in the whole village."

"I do not suppose that there is," admitted the landlord.

"Then you see the difficulty that I am in, Mr. Miller."

"Yes, I see it, and I have the remedy."

Amy looked up inquiringly.

"You are aware that I am a house and land agent, I presume, Mrs. Wynne?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, there has just been intrusted to my care an old manor-house of this neighborhood. I say of this neighborhood, because it is but two or three miles from the village, though, in point of fact, it is really across the line in Virginia."

"Yes, sir; but you know we could not rent a manor-house," said Amy, in surprise.

"Of course not, madam. And neither is the manor-house for rent. It is scarcely in a tenantable state at present. It is in a very dilapidated condition, and if there are two or three habitable rooms in the house, they are all. I believe, though I am not certain, that it has not been inhabited for many years. The ground belonging to the manor has gradually been alienated by the former proprietors until now there is none left except the garden and orchard that surrounds the house."

"Well, sir, and about the house?" said Amy, seeing that the landlord had paused.

"Yes. It is the property of a minor, who is now travel-

ling with his mamma in Europe. The guardians of the young man—Browning Brothers, Baltimore—have written to me to look after the old place, and especially to put some trustworthy person into it, as care-taker, who will live there, rent free, on condition of protecting the property from the depredations of the poor neighbors, who in fact have already pulled down piecemeal nearly all the fences, and have now commenced upon the window-shutters. So, my dear Mrs. Wynne, as I received the letter from Browning Brothers in regard to putting a care-taker in the old manor-house at the same time that I received another letter from young Doctor Meadows asking to rent this place if possible, I naturally thought of you. And now I renew my proposition: If you will vacate this place immediately, I will take the twelve dollars for the quarter's rent, and give you a receipt in full for the whole quarter. And I will put you, rent free, as care-taker in the Old Manor-House."

"It is a tempting offer," said Amy, hesitatingly; "but would it not be better to place some stout man there? Could a frail woman like myself effectually protect the property from such desperadoes?"

"Oh, mother! mother, dear," interrupted Owen, eagerly, "take it! do take it! I can protect it from them—indeed I can! I will keep 'em off with father's gun. Indeed I will, sir, if you will only trust me," he added, earnestly, turning from Amy, to whom he had first spoken, to Mr. Miller, who smiled indulgently upon his boyish presumption.

"Very likely, my lad, if your body was as stout as your soul is brave," said the landlord. Then looking at Amy, he answered her:

"They are not desperadoes who prey upon the property, Mrs. Wynne. They are only wretched, petty thieves—free negroes and poor whites—too lazy or too worthless to work. They can be kept at bay by the mere fact of the

house being inhabited. I think you had better close with my offer. There are other advantages. There is plenty of firewood close at hand in the woods; the game there is abundant. Owen, your traps would be prolific; and there is a great deal of fruit in the orchard in summer."

"Oh, mother! mother, dear, take it! do take it! Indeed I will keep off the thieves with father's gun!" said Owen, eagerly.

"I will take it, my boy. I will take it, Mr. Miller. My only reason for hesitating indeed was the doubt whether I really could take care of the property. I thank you very much for thinking of me, Mr. Miller," said Amy, gratefully.

"And now, how soon could you be ready to move?"

"As soon as you please, sir."

"Could you be out of this house by the last of this week?"

"Oh, yes, sir."

"Then I will give you until Saturday. By Saturday evening I hope you will be settled in your new home; so that on Monday next I can begin to prepare this for the new tenant," said Mr. Miller, rising to go.

"Oh, mother, mother, dear! Oh, Mr. Miller, please stop a minute!" exclaimed Owen, eagerly, first to his mother, then to the landlord.

"What is it, Owen?" inquired Amy.

"What is it, my little man?" smiled Mr. Miller.

"Oh, mother dear, perhaps Mr. Miller will write to that young doctor and ask him to buy our stock of drugs and instruments and things," said the boy.

"Why, certainly! I suppose he would be very glad to buy the stock and fixtures," said Mr. Miller.

"To think I never thought of that! But Owen thinks of every thing," said Amy.

"I will write to Doctor Meadows to-night. And in the meantime you may leave the shop just in its present condition until we hear from him. Very likely he will take it

off your hands just as it is. But you can pack up your household furniture and personal effects. I will send a cart to take them to Forest Lodge on any day that you may name, Mrs. Wynne. And the removal shall cost you nothing. Good-night, madam," said Mr. Miller.

Owen attended him out and fastened the door after him.

When Owen returned to the back parlor, he found Nancy there, eager, in her affectionate interest in the family, to know the result of the landlord's visit.

Amy explained to her the whole plan of removal.

"And only think, Nancy, how jolly it will be! No rent to pay, and a great big house to roam over!" said Owen.

"Damp, old, musty place, I dare say it is, leaking in every room, every time it rains!" said the woman.

"Oh, but there is plenty of wood all around the house, and brush-wood enough to keep a fire in every room," said Owen.

"Umph, humph! Who gwine to cut it?"

"Why I am, Nancy. And besides, there are such lots of game—rabbits, and partridges, and all!"

"It's a-getting out o' season for rabbits and partridges now."

"But then the fruit will be coming on. Such lots of fruit!"

"Old, worm-eaten stuff! I know it is."

"Oh, Nancy, Nancy, you have eat something that has disagreed with you! Why do you discourage us so!"

"'Cause you mayn't be disappointed when you gets there! Don't tell me. If the old place was live-in-able, that old screw Ben Miller wouldn't let you have it rent free."

"But it is not *his* place. He is only the agent to put somebody in it to keep the thieves from pulling down the fences, until the place is rented, or sold, or repaired, or something. And I am going to keep off the thieves with father's gun."

"You're a-gwine to blow yourself up or something."

"Oh, Nancy, Nancy! I told you how it would be if you *would* eat two pounds of fried tripe at one meal! *That's* what's the matter!"

"Berry well den! tripe is it? Wait till you get there, that's all! wait till you get there!" said the old woman, nodding her head.

"Nancy, dear," said her mistress, soothingly, "I think the plan is a good one. It will relieve me from the heavy burden of rent. And that will be such a load off my mind! And then there are other considerations that Owen has mentioned—the game in winter, the fruit in summer, and the pure country air always! But still, Nancy, if you do not wish to go with us, you need not do so."

"Who, *me?* *Me* not go 'long o' you? You better believe I'm a-gwine! Catch me leaving of you to yourselves, to go to 'struction your own way! Not if I knows it! Please my 'Vine Marster, I 'listed in this cause the day I made up my mind to stay long of you, and I gwine stick to it. Dar!"

"I think you will like the change, Nancy—indeed I do," said Owen.

"Humph! Well, maybe I shall like it all the better for not expecting much of it," grunted the old woman, as she took herself off to the kitchen to finish up her work there.

"Oh, Owen love! what a load! what a load off my mind! This rent-day I have been dreading these two months past. And to think how pleasantly it has passed off! Not only am I free of the quarter's rent just due, but free from caring about rent for an indefinite time to come. Oh, Owen, love, I feel so happy to-night! And I think I shall like that old manor-house so well! I dare say it is a fine, dreamy old place, with spacious rooms within and forest trees without, and old legends and traditions hanging about it, if one did but know," said Amy, musingly.

"Oh, yes, mother dear! what a jolly place it will be all

out! Think of the birds and the rabbits! And the firewood! And the pears and apples and peaches next summer!"

"Yes, Owen. And think of our having that large house to ourselves. Plenty of space to take exercise in when the weather is bad and we cannot go out!"

"And, oh, mother, if the new doctor will only buy our stock and fixings!"

"Fixtures, Owen."

"Fixtures, then. What a lift that would give us!"

"Yes, indeed, my darling. But that would be almost too good luck to hope for. Why, Owen, if he was to buy us out, even at half price, we should be able to pay every debt we owe in the world. For, listen: The stock and fixtures here cost your poor dear father six hundred dollars. And if the new doctor would give us only three hundred for them, that sum would entirely free us from debt and leave us some cash in hand besides."

"Oh, mother dear, let us hope and pray that he will," said Owen, fervently.

Amy smiled at the ardor of her little son, and then she took up her needle-work and sewed diligently to finish one of the Reverend Mr. Morley's ruffled shirts that she had on hand.

I do not know whether or not hope is a good cough medicine. But certainly Amy's cough did not trouble her much that evening.

Later, when she gathered her little household together for their evening worship, she offered up earnest thanks for what she called the great deliverance of the day.

And that night, for the first time in many weeks, Amy slept in sweet peace.

CHAPTER XIX.

A NEW SCENE.

The night is mother of the day,
The winter of the spring;
And ever upon old decay
The greatest mosses cling.
Behind the cloud the starlight lurks,
Through showers the sunbeams fall;
For God who loveth all his works
Hath left his Hope with all.—*Whittier.*

EARLY the next morning active preparations were commenced for the removal.

Amy was obliged to confine herself to her sewing and to the care of the two children.

But Nancy went vigorously to work to wash up everything that could be washed in the house, so that all that was to be left behind, and all that was to be carried away, should be clean.

And Owen set to upon the shop, and took down and dusted every pot and jar and gave all a thorough renovating to make it more attractive to the young doctor who might be the purchaser of the stock. And in the evening they gathered around the one tallow candle, Amy sewing, Nancy ironing, and Owen polishing the metal tops of the jars, and all discussing hopefully the new home.

And the next day passed very much in the same manner.

And in the evening of the third day their preparations were nearly concluded—so nearly that they were all as usual sitting around the tallow candle, and *not*, as usual, resting from their labors, when there came a ring at the shop-door bell.

Owen went out to answer it, and returned ushering in Mr. Miller

"Good evening, Mrs. Wynne. I have a letter here from young Doctor Meadows. He writes that he thinks he may take the stock and fixtures off your hands, if they are in a good condition and you will let him have them at a reasonable rate," he said, as he shook hands with Amy.

"Oh, thank you, sir, very much! Indeed I will. He shall have every thing at his own valuation. The medicines are quite fresh, *for medicines* My dear lost husband selected them, not a year ago. And if Doctor Meadows will give me even so much as half what they cost, I shall be entirely satisfied," said Amy, eagerly.

"Oh, I dare say he will do that. Perhaps he might give you more. But at a forced sale, you know, things must be sold at a great sacrifice. And my advice to you is, to take what you can get for the stock and fixtures of the shop, because, in fact, you have but one possible purchaser, and unless you sell them to him they will be a dead loss on your hands."

"I know that, sir. I shall follow your counsel. And I thank you very much for giving it."

"Not at all. But now another thing. What day shall I send the cart to take your goods and chattels to Forest Lodge?"

"Any day you please, Mr. Miller. They are quite ready for removal."

"Then let it be on Saturday morning, as we first arranged."

"Certainly, if you please."

"I fancy Doctor Meadows will arrive to-night or to-morrow night. If so, he will pay you a visit before you go. If not, you can leave the shop just as it stands for his inspection. I believe that is all I have to say for the present. Good evening, Mrs. Wynne." And with a bow the landlord went away.

Amy had scarcely finished breakfast the next morning when she was startled by a visit from the young doctor.

He had arrived the night before. And he had come this morning to inspect the shop and possibly to make an offer for it, as it stood. He was a tall, thin, spectral-looking young man, whose appearance of ill-health naturally tempted the beholder to advise him:

"Physician, heal thyself."

With the permission of Mrs. Wynne, he entered upon a careful examination of the medicines and also of the books. This investigation occupied him about four hours, at the end of which time he came into the little back parlor, where Amy sat sewing beside the cradle of the children, and said:

"Mrs. Wynne, I understand the stock and fixtures of this shop cost the late Doctor Wynne about six hundred dollars."

"Yes, sir, about that."

"I find that very little of the stock has been disposed of, and that what remains is in a very excellent condition."

"I think you are right, sir."

"I am willing, therefore, to pay you four hundred dollars for it as it stands."

Amy fairly sprang at his offer. She could not conceal her surprise and delight. They were beaming from every feature of her face.

"That is very liberal indeed, sir," she said.

"It is more, perhaps, than another would offer; but I like to be fair. Two hundred dollars I will pay you down at once; and two hundred more at the end of six months. Will that be satisfactory?"

"Perfectly so."

"Then we will conclude this business at once," said Doctor Meadows, taking out his pocket-book, and selecting from it two notes of a hundred dollars each, which he handed over to Amy.

"I thank you, sir! I thank you very much indeed,"

said Amy, earnestly, for she almost felt as if this unexpected money was a donation.

Owen ran into the shop and brought writing materials. And Amy wrote an acknowledgment of the money. And Doctor Meadows gave her his note for the balance due, payable in six months after date.

When these papers were exchanged between them, the young doctor arose and took leave of the widow.

As soon as he was gone, Amy sprang from her chair with joy irradiating her whole countenance. She had never in her whole life before had half so much money, or half so much need of it as now! But it was not the money itself as much as the use she was about to put it to that made her so happy.

"Oh! Owen, love," she exclaimed, "now run and get your hat and cloak! We will go directly and pay our debts! Oh, thank heaven! thank heaven! that we can now settle with everybody, and they will know that we are honest."

And as Owen scampered off to obey her, his mother flew up-stairs as fast as her failing breath would permit, to prepare herself for the walk.

She soon came down quite ready, and smiling with delight; and as Owen was waiting for her, they set out.

It was a sunny winter's day, warm and brilliant for the season; and Amy felt so exhilarated by the new sense of freedom that the means of paying her debts had given her, that she almost ran along.

Her manner became sobered, however, as they drew near the establishment of Mr. Durkee, the undertaker, for it was to that place they were going first.

Amy entered, and walked through the gloomy shop to the dark little back office, where Mr. Durkee sat alone, bending over some account-books.

"Oh, Mr. Durkee! I have come to pay you the balance I have owed you so long, and to thank you for your kind-

ness in trusting me so far. And oh! I am so glad to have the money to give you at last," she said, excitedly. And without waiting for him to speak, she tremblingly opened her purse, and took out one of the notes, and laid it before him.

Mr. Durkee, who had no more expectation of getting that money than of falling heir to an earldom, looked up in bewilderment.

"Please give me the change and a receipt in full, Mr. Durkee, as I have several other places to call, and a great deal more to do," said Amy, eagerly.

But Mr. Durkee looked from her to the note and scratched his head, as if he did not understand.

Amy impatiently tapped the note with her finger as if to call his attention to it.

"What's this for?" he then inquired, taking it up.

"To pay you, Mr. Durkee."

"Oh! Ah! But—is this quite convenient now, Mrs. Wynne?"

"Oh, quite! entirely! and I am so glad to have it to give you!"

"But I never pressed you for it."

"Oh, no, I know you did not. But my own conscience did."

Mr. Durkee scratched his head harder than before, slowly referred to his books, deliberately made out his account, receipted in full, and handed it to Amy with the change of her large note, saying:

"I thank you, Mrs. Wynne. And I shall be very happy to receive your orders on any future occasion when you may require my services."

"Heaven forbid!" gasped Amy, under her breath, as she raised her startled eyes to the face of the undertaker.

Poor Durkee had had no idea of shocking her. He had

but used the tradesman's stereotyped form of thanks without considering the terror that underlaid his words.

But Amy soon forgot them. When she was once more out in the sunny street, the exhilarating atmosphere, the cheerful scene, and the pleasant errand all combined to raise her spirits to that degree that she again walked on with the springing step and animated countenance of her happier days.

"Now I shall never be afraid to pass *his* door, or ashamed to look *him* in the face again, Owen, dear. Oh, what a bondage was my debt, and what a freedom to be out of it! Ah, how delightful to be able to show the people who were so good as to trust us in our need that we were worthy of their confidence! And to walk freely through the streets of the village without holding my breath and hurrying past some houses; or crossing the street to avoid meeting some people; or dropping down my veil to keep from being recognized by others. Ah, Owen, what liberty this is! Oh, my dear boy, this is the most blessed day I have seen since your dear father went to Heaven!" she said, as she hurried along.

"I knew this day would come, mother. But I did not think it would come so soon," said Owen, as they stopped before the door of Mr. Lacy, to whom Amy still owed a very small balance for her mourning.

"I congratulate you, Mrs. Wynne," said Mr. Lacy, coming to meet her. "I hear that young Doctor Meadows has bought you out."

"Oh, yes, indeed. And the sum he gives me enables me to pay all my debts. Here is what I owe you, Mr. Lacy. Take it, with my thanks for all your kindness," said Amy, laying the money before him.

"But—really now—I am not in any hurry, Mrs. Wynne. You may have other uses for this," said Lacy, hesitatingly.

"Oh, no, indeed I haven't. Oh, *do* take it. If you only knew what a pleasure it gives me to pay my debts!

I used to be so much afraid I should never be able to pay them. But, thank Heaven, a way has been unexpectedly opened for me to do so!"

Mr. Lacy took the money and gave her a receipt in full. And Amy and her little son left the store and walked away towards the other end of the village, where was situated Mr. Spicer's large grocery and feed-store.

As they drew near they saw Mr. Spicer standing sunning himself in his front door.

It was now high noon, an hour at which the primitive inhabitants of Rogues' Harbor dined, and consequently it was *not* the hour at which customers "most did congregate" in Mr. Spicer's grocery. Amy was fortunate in finding him disengaged for the time being.

A tall, portly man somewhat passed middle age, with a full face, brown hair and eyes, and with a most kindly expression of countenance, was William Spicer. A self-made man, who had begun life by sweeping out the store and making the fires in the very establishment of which he was now the head. A Christian man who carried his religion into his business and did every thing as to the Lord.

He smiled on Amy and her little son as he saw them approach; and he came forth a step to meet them, and held out his hand to welcome them.

"Oh, Mr. Spicer," began Amy, "I have not had an opportunity before, of thanking you for your great——"

"Come in," said Mr. Spicer, gently interrupting her expressions of gratitude by drawing her into the store, by the hand that he had taken.

"For your great kindness," continued Amy, "to me and my——"

"Sit down," said Mr. Spicer, dusting a chair and placing it for her accommodation.

"And my children," persisted Amy. "We shall never cease to be grateful, Mr. Spicer."

"Tut, tut; it is not worth mentioning."

"Indeed, I do not know what ever we should have done this winter, if it had not been for you."

"Nonsense, my child!—my dear lady, I should say."

"No; it is not nonsense, Mr. Spicer. It was our salvation If you could have seen me——" Amy spoke out of the simple frankness and warm gratitude of her guileless heart—"if you could have seen me waiting for that basket every Monday evening, and blaming myself for having sent it at all, and yet fearing all the time that it might come home empty, you would unders and how great was our need and how much your kindness was to us. But the basket never *did* come home empty. As regularly, yes! and as graciously as came the daily sun to brighten our world, came that weekly basket to comfort us. It never, never failed us!"

While Amy spoke, the big grocer fidgetted and fidgetted, and finally sidled himself behind the counter, and began to make a feint of business by fumbling with the scales and weights.

"And do you think that we can ever forget such kindness, or esteem it lightly? Oh, no! But I did not come here only to speak these words; although I was obliged to utter them! they were swelling in my heart. But I come here not only to say, but to prove that I am not ungrateful for your kindness or unworthy of your trust," said Amy, rising and going to the counter, where she opened her purse, took from it her remaining large note and laid it before her creditor.

Mr. Spicer gently pushed it towards her.

Amy looked up at him in surprise, and took up the note and handed it to him.

"Put it up, put it up, my dear child,—my good lady, I should say!" said Mr. Spicer.

"But, sir, I wish to settle my bill. Don't you understand that I do?"

"I—hem! I really do not know the amount of the bill, Mrs. Wynne. I have not made it out yet," said the grocer, in confusion.

"I do not care to have the items. If you will only let me know the sum-total, I will settle it at once," persisted Amy.

"I—upon my word, I do not know the sum-total! Nor have I time now to examine the books. Some other time, my dear Mrs. Wynne. I fact, I wish you would allow the account to run on to the end of the year, dating from the time you began to deal with me."

"Mr. Spicer, you are very good, and I understand what you mean. But you are quite mistaken. I am really very well able to pay you now. In have sold out my stock this morning to the new doctor who is going to settle here."

"Ah!" exclaimed Mr. Spicer, as if he was glad to change the subject. "Sold out, have you? I hope you got good terms."

"Yes, very good," said Amy; and in the simple candor of her soul, she told him exactly what those terms were.

"Two-thirds of the original cost, and one-half down, and one-half at the end of six months. Pretty fair, I suppose, for a forced sale," said Mr. Spicer.

"And now you see, sir, how well able I am to pay you," said Amy.

"But—you had other liabilities."

"Oh, yes; but I have settled them! And see, I have this left!" And with child-like confidingness she opened her purse and displayed its contents.

"Yes," said Mr. Spicer, thoughtfully. "And now, my dear Mrs. Wynne, I have a favor to ask of you. Would you grant me a favor if you could?"

"Yes! a thousand, if I could!" said Amy, fervently.

"Well, it is this: it would really inconvenience me very much to make out your account just now. Therefore, I entreat you, as a favor, to let it run on for six months

longer, until, in fact, that second two hundred dollars owing you falls due. Then, if you insist upon it, you may pay the bill."

"Yes! I see through it all, Mr. Spicer. And I see your great kindness in it all. I see, also, that you are resolved to have your own way in the matter. And so I will agree to your plan, on condition that at the end of the time named, you will certainly receive your pay without demur."

"I will promise you to do so, provided, when the time comes, you still insist upon it," said Mr. Spicer.

And with this compromise, they parted, mutually satisfied.

When Amy and Owen had left the store, Mr. Spicer remained ruminating with his head upon his hand and his elbow on his desk.

"Yes, provided, when the time comes, she still insists upon it," he thoughtfully repeated—"that will bring the first of August. Poor little thing! poor, poor little thing, how fragile she is! And it is just upon such slight creatures that the heaviest burdens of life oftenest fall. Why, she is as much of a child as her own little son. More indeed, for he is a manly little fellow for his age. Now what shall I do?"

"Let me have one of those sugar-cured hams, if you please, Spicer," said no less a person than the Rev. Mr. Morley, coming into the store, and cutting short the meditations of the grocer by practically answering the question in an unexpected manner.

Mr. Spicer, still in a dream, waited on his customer, and then returned to his ruminations.

William Spicer was emphatically a good man. Honest and truthful in his dealings with his fellow-men. Kind and compassionate to all who needed sympathy and help. And especially so to the poor young widow, whom chance had brought to his acquaintance. Her sorrows, her helplessness, her beauty, and more than all, the innocent frankness and

fervor of her nature, all powerfully attracted the big grocer, and filled his honest heart with the purest sentiments of pity and admiration.

But what he should do with all this sympathy he hardly knew. He wished to do her good, but how? He would have been delighted to make her comfortable and happy, but in what manner? If she had been his widowed daughter, now, or his young sister, he might have been as good to her as he wished to be. And it would have been the greatest pleasure of his life to have cherished *her* life, and catered for her until she grew strong and well. He thought of the rich port wine, and the luscious meats and rare delicacies with which he would have nourished her strength—for the big grocer, without being the least bit of a glutton, was a good feeder himself, and had a saving faith in food and drink, and a holy horror of physic. He thought of the warm furs and velvets that he would have wrapped her in—had she been his widowed daughter, you know! And he thought how pretty she was, even with her thin cheeks, and in her rusty, black dress; and how very, *very* pretty she would be if she were well and becomingly dressed; and what a pleasure it would be to see her smile —and when he came to this point, he said—"Bother!" and began to turn over the leaves of his day-book, as if he were bent upon business.

His young shopman returned from his dinner. And seeing his employer apparently busied in account-books, made himself very busy waiting on the customers, who now began to come in.

But Mr. Spicer was thinking only of Amy—her beauty, her patience, her artless candor and innocent fervor; and last, but not least, her great needs of every sort which had taken such possession of the honest grocer's soul that he could not have shaken them off even if he had been inclined to do so. Then came the ever-recurring question.

What could he do to help her? What, indeed, would she let him do?

He had filled her little basket every Monday, making its contents a free gift, under the veil of filling her order. He had always given her down weight and overflowing measure of every thing that she ordered. And he had never charged them on his books. He would have been glad if she had ordered more than that poor little dollar's worth a week; but she never did. He would have been glad to have sent her more upon his own responsibility; but he was afraid that she would detect the gifts under their disguise of sales, and that she might consider them as alms, and feel wounded; and in her pride or delicacy, cease to send for the provisions, and thus suffer want. That was the reason Mr. Spicer never sent more than the things she ordered each week, but all in heavy weight and overflowing measure. He was very glad when the Christmas Holidays gave him the privilege of sending her a gift.

But now she wanted to pay him. He had put her off for the present, but how should he manage to do so for the future? And in the meantime what could he do to make her more comfortable and happy? He looked around his large store—almost a warehouse it might be called—piled from cellar to roof with pipes and butts; hogsheads and barrels; chests and boxes; pots and jars; all filled with family provisions of every description; and he sighed with a feeling of pain and compunction to think that he had so much and she so little!

"Why, I might send every week enough of the very best in this house to keep her poor, little family, not only in the necessaries, but in the comforts and luxuries of the table, and never even miss it! Miss it! I shouldn't miss ten times as much! I have such superfluity and she such need! Ah! these inequalities must be equalized somewhere, some time, in this world or the next, now or in the future!"

CHAPTER XX.

OWEN'S PLAN.

So in those winters of the soul,
By bitter blasts and drear,
O'erswept from memory's frozen pole,
Will sunny days appear.
Reviving hope and faith they show
The soul its living powers,
And how beneath the winter's snow
Lie germs of summer flowers.—*Whittier.*

While Mr. Spicer ruminated over the best way of helping Amy against her will and without her knowledge, the young mother and her little son walked homewards—Amy with a satisfied and happy countenance, and Owen with a thoughtful brow and down-cast eyes.

"What is my little lad thinking of?" inquired his mother.

"Of—a plan—for beginning to make our living and perhaps our fortune," answered the boy, slowly.

"Our fortune, Owen dear?" repeated Amy, with a smile.

"Yes, mother. How much money have you got left?"

"One hundred and three dollars, dear."

"Well then, mother, don't let us spend it all; let us invest a part of it."

"In—vest a part of it," echoed Amy, turning around and gazing into the face of her little son with as much amazement as though his childish lips had just proposed a plan for paying the national debt. "Why, Owen dear, what do you know about investments? You can scarcely be supposed to know the meaning of the word."

"Oh! don't I know it neither, mother? You better believe I do, mother dear! I haven't been minding our shop and running in and out of Mr. Lacy's and asking him ques-

tions about business for nothing! And I have thought about it a great deal, mother dear."

"Well, now tell me what you mean by investing money?"

"Why, doing something with it to make it bring more money, mother. I have found out *this* much by talking to Mr. Lacy, that there are two ways of making money—one is by work and the other is by trade; and trade requires capital. Now, mother dear, if you will give the capital, I'll give the work, and we will begin to make our fortunes."

Amy stopped short in the street and gazed at her little son. And then she spoke indulgently, as though humoring the boy's whim, and said:

"Well, Owen, if you had a little 'capital,' as you call it, what would you do with it?"

"Oh, mother dear, I know! I thought it all out, last night, as I lay on my bed. I said to myself, if only you had fifty dollars to spare after paying your debts, what I could do with it."

"What, Owen?"

"Well, I will tell you, mother. You know Mr. Lacy is going on to New York to buy his spring goods. And I thought if I had the money I would ask him to take it with him, and when he bought his own goods to buy me some and bring them home. And then I could make up a pack and go through the country selling them. And I should make a great deal of money that way, I know I should."

"Turn pedler, Owen?" said Amy, with a smile.

"Yes, mother dear, to begin with."

"You are not strong enough to carry a pack."

"It need not be a big one at first, mother. And then you know I shall grow stronger every day."

This point of the conversation brought them to the market shop. And Amy went in to buy something comfortable for dinner.

And then they walked home.

But Owen would not give up his plan. His heart was so

set upon commencing life as a trader. After dinner, when Amy was sitting in her low chair between the cradle and the work-stand, sewing busily to finish a garment that was to be sent home early the next morning, before they should leave the village, Owen renewed the subject.

"Oh, mother, dear, if you only knew how much I want to go into it! I feel so sure I could make money."

"Don't you think so much about money, my little son."

"Oh, mother, how can I help it, when you want so many things it would get; and the two poor little sisters, too! It is not for myself I wish to make it."

"I know it, my dear, unselfish boy—I know it well."

"Then you'll let me try to make it, mother, dear."

"I don't know, Owen."

"Look-ee here, Miss Amy, child," said Nancy, who was busily engaged in taking from the cupboard all the crockery ware that was not in immediate use, and packing it into a case preparatory to the removal—"lookee here! Don't you go giving that boy money to fling away—don't."

"Oh, mother, dear, don't listen to Nancy! She is very good, but she don't know any thing about business, and I do."

"You! Oh, my! what a man you must think yourself, to be sure. Hush, honey!"

"No, Nancy, not a man; only a little boy; but still I know what I am talking about. Mother, dear, I should not lose your money; I should increase it. Do let me, mother!"

Amy turned again and gazed at her boy—at the large, well-packed forehead, the clear, bright eyes, the firm, sweet mouth—and she felt that there was intelligence, self-reliance and singleness of purpose, that sooner or later must insure success in whatever he might undertake.

"Owen, love," she said, "you may take your hat, and run over to Mr. Lacy's, and ask him to come over here as soon as he has closed his store. I will talk this matter

over with him. If he thinks well of it I will agree to your plan. For you know, dear, he has much more experience than you or I."

You may depend upon it that Owen lost no time. He hurried over to Mr. Lacy's store and delivered his message. Not content with that, he waited until the customers with whom Mr. Lacy was engaged had left the store, and then he opened the whole subject of his visit.

Mr. Lacy listened to Owen's scheme with more favor than the boy had expected; and he promised to be over to Mrs. Wynne as soon as he should close his store.

Owen went home full of hope.

And that same evening, while Amy was still sewing by the light of the solitary tallow candle, Mr. Lacy came.

Amy, half ashamed of what she feared her little son's boyish presumption, told Mr. Lacy of Owen's wish to invest fifty dollars in pedler's wares to hawk through the country.

"I only speak of this, Mr. Lacy, that, as an experienced man of business, whose opinion must carry conviction with it, you may assure my eager boy here, that his scheme is altogether impracticable," she said, in a deprecating manner.

"But suppose I do not consider it impracticable, Mrs. Wynne," inquired Lacy, with a smile.

Amy looked up in surprise.

Owen's eyes danced.

"I tell you, Mrs. Wynne, that you must not judge Owen by any ordinary standard of boyhood. I have talked with him, or rather he has talked with *me* a great deal lately. And he has asked me more questions about wholesale, retail and finance, and capital, credit and business generally, in one day, than I could have answered in two years; more questions in fact, than I ever thought of putting to myself or to any one else."

"Yes, his thoughts run on those themes with a pertinacity

that is perfectly amazing to me. I should have thought it would have been his ambition to follow his father's profession. I cannot imagine what could have put trade into his head."

"What? madam? Why, what puts it into the head of one boy of talent to read law, and nothing else, as if the world was filled with nobody but criminals and litigants? Or into the head of another to study medicine as if the world were one great lazar house? Or makes a third a theologian; a fourth to an artist; and so forth, and so forth? Some special gift of Divine Providence, Mrs. Wynne, that fits the boy in question for the one career that he aspires to, and for no other! that would ensure him success in that career, and no other! Most of the failures in life are made by men who have been turned aside from the career for which nature had fitted them."

"But about Owen?"

"About Owen, dear Mrs. Wynne. Help him if you can; but do not hinder him, whatever you do. I would be willing to give him the little start that he desires. Your son is no ordinary boy, Mrs. Wynne. He unites in himself three of the greatest elements of the highest success—wonderful acuteness of intellect, integrity of heart, and steadiness of aim. Trust in him; try him; give him the chance to show you what he can do," said Mr. Lacy, rising to leave.

"One moment, if you please, sir," said Amy, detaining him. "You perfectly understand the scheme in all its bearings?"

"Oh, yes, Mrs. Wynne!"

"And approve it?"

"Heartily! I would myself advance the money for the boy."

"Thank you; there is no need of that. But," added Amy, smiling, "we must ask your help in another way."

"Certainly! Owen explained that! He wishes me to

purchase some goods for him when I go to New York to lay in my own stock. I need not say that I will do so with great pleasure."

"Thank you again. When do you go to New York?"

"On Monday."

"Then, as we leave here to-morrow morning, we had better settle this business to-night," said Amy, taking out her purse and handing her large note to Mr. Lacy. "I wish you to take half of that. I do not wish to risk more. I do not feel so sure of the success of this enterprise as you and Owen do!" she added.

Mr. Lacy smiled. And as he happened to have taken the whole contents of his till and put them in his pocket to be carried home, he was able to give Amy her change. And then, indeed, he arose and took leave.

"I hope you will succeed, Owen," said Amy, thoughtfully.

"I know I shall, mother dear," answered the boy, confidently.

Amy was still very thoughtful. At length she said:

"It's our last night in our little home, Owen, love—a home made doubly sacred by grief and joy; by death and by new life. Let us pray together, dear, that the Lord's blessing may rest upon the home that we leave, as well as on the one where we go."

When these acts of devotion were over, Amy drew her little son to her bosom and tenderly embraced him, murmuring:

"Heaven bless you, my dear boy. Oh, Owen, how my heart swelled with joy to-night as Mr. Lacy spoke of you!"

"Mother dear, mine didn't!" said Owen, solemnly.

"How, my child? what do you mean?"

"My heart didn't swell; it shrank!"

"Why, Owen?—I don't understand you."

"Oh mother, it was because I knew he thought me a better boy than I was; and it made my heart shrink."

"But Owen dear, you are a very good boy."

"Oh no, mother. I can't help it! I must tell you the truth. You know we said we would tell each other all our secrets, didn't we?"

"Yes, darling," said Amy, speaking very gently, though her dark eyes dilated with a vague uneasiness. What confession was her little son about to make?

"Mother dear, you don't know what a bad-like boy I am sometimes, inside of myself!"

"Inside of yourself, Owen," repeated Amy, with her eyes growing larger and larger with amazement.

"Yes, mother, inside; not outside. I try to keep the badness down all I can."

"Tell me all about it, darling," said Amy, gazing at him with a queer blending of perplexity, amusement and anxiety in the expression of her face.

"Well, then, mother, first, sometimes on Sundays, I feel as if I would rather go sliding on the pond than go to church to hear Mr. Morley preach."

"That is bad, dear."

"But then I never do go sliding; but always go to church."

"What else, Owen dear?"

"Why, when the ladies you work for, hurry you so much and pay you so little, I feel my angry passions rise, and I would like to—I don't know what I wouldn't like to say to them, and sometimes I can scarcely help saying it."

"Is that all, dear?"

"Oh no, mother, not half! I covet my neighbor's goods whenever I go near the market and see the fine, fat poultry and the plump beef and mutton, and I grumble to myself to think that there should be so much there and none for you."

"Go on, dear."

"And now for the worst of all! Only to think of it, mother dear! It hardly seems to be my own self that was so near doing such a thing!"

"What—what—Owen?" asked Amy, in breathless anxiety.

"Robbing a poor, little bird's nest, mother. Oh! But I didn't do it! No, thanks be to goodness, I didn't. I was just a-going to do it to prove to the other boys that I could climb a tree and get a nest as well as any of them could. But I thought of the two poor little sisters in the cradle at home, and how I should feel, if I should come back and find somebody had been there and stole them while I was gone! And so I let the poor little tiny birds alone."

"What else, Owen?"

"That is all, I believe, mother dear. You won't think me a good boy, now. And I am sorry for that; but still I had to tell you what a bad-like boy I am inside sometimes, and how near to being a very bad boy outside, too. But still," said the child, smiling brightly, "I feel better now I have told you all about it! I feel as good as if I had cleaned out the shop."

Amy drew him to her bosom, and while she held him there she said:

"It seems that you have been tempted but you have not sinned. To suffer temptation is not to fall into sin, my darling. But to resist temptation is the noblest effort of the soul. Always tell me your little inward trials and difficulties, Owen."

"Indeed I will, mother dear. Why, aint we bosom friends?"

"Always, Owen," she said. And she kissed him and sent him off to bed, and she thanked the Lord, oh! how fervently, for her dear boy, of whose purity of heart and nobility of mind, every day gave a new revelation.

The next morning was a very busy one in Amy's little household.

As soon as breakfast was over, Nancy washed and packed up all the remaining pieces of crockery ware, cutlery, and so forth. And Amy dressed herself and the children for their ride.

At eight o'clock Mr. Miller's cart was at the door. And Mr. Miller himself walked into the shop.

"Mrs. Wynne," he said, "the cart will have to make two trips before it can take all your furniture, I am sure. And I think that you had better send your servant and your son on with the first load, to light fires and air the house and make it comfortable before you and the little ones go. You and they had better stay here until the cart comes back, and go with the second load."

"Thank you," said Amy, hesitatingly.

But Nancy spoke up.

"You do as the ge'man 'vises of you, honey. I dessay that there ole barn is just as cold and as damp as Siberiam icebergs! which I makes no doubt you might scrape the mould offen the walls with a garden rake. You stay here till the arternoon, honey, and let me and Owen go first and make the place comfor'ble for you."

"Do, mother dear," said Owen, adding his voice to the urgings of the others.

And Amy took off her bonnet and sat down to wait.

The cart was soon loaded, and with Owen and Nancy perched high on the top of the furniture, it started gayly for the forest.

Amy mended her fire; sat the two children down in the cradle; and took a small roll of the everlasting needle-work from her pocket and sat down to sew to pass away the time while waiting.

It was a desolate scene enough. More than half the furniture was gone; and the house looked very bare; there was nothing left in that room except the sewing chair, the cradle, and the air tight. And Amy quite dreaded the three or four hours that she would have to wait.

But she had sat there only about fifteen minutes when she was startled by the sound of a carriage driving up to the shop door.

When she hurried out to see who was there, she was surprised to behold Mrs. Potts, the landlady of the Elm Tree Inn, who had driven up in her gig.

"I can't leave the horse, my dear; but Mr. Miller has just told me that you are here all alone in this empty house waiting till the cart comes back for you. And so I have come to say that you must bring the babies and get right in here, and go home long o' me to spend the morning and take dinner. And by that time the cart will come for you. Now bring the babies out and give me one of them to hold—I can hold a baby and drive a horse at the same time—and you can hold the other, and we shall get along quite comfortable. Hurry now, my dear."

Amy thanked her kind neighbor and hurried accordingly.

The doctor's man was in the shop, engaged in re-arranging the shelves. And with him, Amy left word that as soon as the cart should return, she should be sent for from the Elm Tree Inn.

Amy spent a very pleasant morning in Mrs. Pott's cosy private parlor; and she had a comfortable dinner of roast chicken and rice pudding, with a good glass of wine.

And about four o'clock in the afternoon she was summoned by Owen—Owen looking so rosy, happy, and active.

"Come, mother dear," he said, "the rest of the things are all packed in the cart, and we are only waiting for you. It is such a jolly old house, mother! And your room is all ready for you. The carpet is down and the curtains up, and the fire is made and the kettle is on, and the table is set. And oh! I think we shall be so happy there, mother! so very happy." All this the eager boy poured forth breathlessly as he was ushered by the waiter into the little parlor where Amy and the children remained with their hostess.

"Don't you see Mrs. Potts, my dear?" said his mother, admonishingly.

Owen turned in a moment to the place where that good little roly-poly sat, and he made his bow.

"And now, my little lad, have you had any dinner out there?" asked Mrs. Potts.

"We didn't have time to think about it, ma'am," answered Owen.

"Ah! then I think the cart must wait a few minutes until you get some."

And Mrs. Potts, with her own plump hands, spread a cloth, and brought in the remnant of the roast chicken and rice pudding, and set them on the table, flanked by a loaf of bread and a pitcher of milk.

She then placed a chair for Owen, who, with another little bow of acknowledgment, seated himself at the table, where he did credit to his own appetite and the landlady's hospitality.

While he was eating, Mrs. Potts was packing a hamper, in doing which she rolled about continually between the bar, the parlor and the dining-room.

And when Owen had finished his dinner, and Amy had put on the children's cloaks and her own bonnet and shawl, and they were all about to start, Mrs. Potts called her waiter and bade him put that hamper into Mrs. Wynne's cart.

And then turning to Amy, she said:

"I know, dear, when people are moving, it is inconvenient to have cooking done. And so I have taken the liberty to put a thing or two into that hamper, already cooked. Well, good-by, dear! And God bless you," she said, stopping with a kiss the outpouring of the widow's thanks.

The cart, with the remnant of the furniture, had been drawn up before the inn. And Amy and the children

were lifted into it and comfortably seated in a nest made of the pillows that had been left for that purpose.

Owen took his seat beside the driver, and the cart started, followed by the cheers and good wishes of all the people of the inn.

In passing their own old home, Amy looked fondly upon it, and prayed that a blessing might rest with it.

On the opposite side of the way, Mr. Lacy stood in his door, waving adieu. Amy nodded and smiled. Owen took off his hat; and even lively Lily Gay clapped her hands and crowed.

When the cart got opposite the parsonage, Amy looked up; but there was no one at the windows to see her pass; so kissing her hand in adieu to the invisible friends within, she went on. And some time before they reached the great grocery store at that end of the village, they saw the big grocer standing in his door with his head turned up the street, watching for them.

As the cart was passing, Mr. Spicer hailed it and ran out to stop it. All a-glow with his haste, he shook hands with Amy, who, in her innocent gratitude, retained the big hand in both her own for a little while before she let it go. He shook hands with Owen, and patted Lily Gay upon the head—Lily Gay, who made friends with him immediately, and insisted on climbing out of her nest and going over to him then and there.

And all this time "Good-afternoon" had been the only words that passed between them all.

The grocer turned and beckoned his young man, who now came from the store lugging a huge box, which, with the aid of the driver, he lifted upon the cart.

Amy looked from one to the other, as if silently asking what this could mean.

"A parting gift, Mrs. Wynne. You cannot refuse it, my dear lady. It is—it is for the children."

"Oo—oo! aa!" cried Lily Gay, in inarticulate baby talk,

as she fought and struggled to get out of her nest and climb up to the bosom of the big grocer, with whose kind face she had fallen in love. Lily May gazed on in utter amazement. And Owen laughed. And Amy smiled.

Mr. Spicer patted the child gently on the head, shook hands all round; prayed God bless them; and went back to his store.

And the cart started and soon left the village behind, and was jolting along through the rough country road that led through the forest.

Amy was very thoughtful. Lily Gay was sulky and wouldn't be entreated, because they had not let her go over to that kind face that had smiled on her like sunshine. All the rest of the little party were happy enough.

"Mother, there are no springs to this cart. Does its motion hurt you?" inquired her little son.

"Oh, no, dear! I like to be jolted; it seems to do me good."

"What is the matter, then?"

"People are so good to me, Owen dear! It makes me feel grave to think of it. Not unhappy, mind you; for it couldn't make me unhappy: but grave; for I ask myself how should it be?"

"Oh, mother dear, how can people help being good to you? Darling mother, when you are so good yourself?"

"Hush, my dear! It may be because I have had such an awful sorrow." And Amy's face suddenly became so serious that Lily Gay, who evidently thought that *her* pouts was the cause of all, suddenly relented and fell to crowing and laughing and caressing her mother with all her heart.

And the cart went on through the forest that bright February afternoon, and in due time came out upon the small clearing, in the midst of which, embosomed in shrubbery, stood the old hall.

CHAPTER XXI.

IN THE OLD MANOR-HOUSE.

Now see a large, old-fashioned room,
With panelled wainscot high;
Old portraits round in order set,
Carved, heavy tables, chairs, buffet
Of dark mahogany.
And there a high-backed, hard settee
On six brown legs and paws,
Flowered o'er with silk embroidery;
And there, all rough with filagree,
Tall screens on gilded claws.—*Mrs. Southey.*

The last rays of the setting sun were piercing through the woods in long lines of gold light, gilding each dry twig and fallen leaf, as the wagon turned into the old disused avenue, now almost obliterated by withered grass and dead foliage.

The wagon drew up before an old gray stone mansion of oblong form and many windows. There was a carved and pillared portal, and a heavy double oaken door in the centre of the front.

All the windows looked dark and glum, except the two on the left side of the front door. These two glowed with a genial light from the fire within.

Owen jumped from the wagon to assist his mother.

Nancy ran out from the house to welcome them.

"Almost frozen, ain't you, Miss Amy, honey? Well, there's a fire inside sich as you ain't seen since the brew-house was burnt down! Better believe it, child. Hush, honey! Dead wood lying about in heaps, all through the forest, begging and praying of you to burn it. There, give me the baby, Marse Owen, and you take t'other one. Lord sake, how cold the child's nose is, to be sure!"

"Goo!" cried Lily Gay, in defiance of cold and every

thing else, as she leaped on being handed from Owen's arms into Nancy's.

Owen then took Lily May and held her carefully to his bosom with one arm, while he offered his hand to help his mother out.

Very lightly Amy touched that willing little hand as she alighted.

And while the driver was engaged in unlading the wagon, Nancy led the whole party into the house.

They entered first a spacious hall, on the left side of which Nancy opened a door, admitting them into a vast apartment, that must have been the drawing-room of the resident family of ancient times.

It appeared to run the whole depth of the house from front to back. And at the back, in a broad fire-place, roared and blazed a great fire, that fully justified Nancy's encomiums. It was fed by no ordinary sawed and split logs; but by great, resinous pine knots and dried roots of trees and huge boles, and sent up a sheet of flame that filled the whole room with a ruddy light.

It cheered the very soul and body of Amy, who approached it, rubbing her hands with satisfaction.

"It's jolly, isn't it, mother?" said Owen, rubbing his hands in sympathy, when he had set Lily May on the floor.

"It is very cheerful," said Amy. "I always loved an open wood-fire."

"It throws out the heat in solid columns," said Nancy, as she brought Amy's own little chair and placed it for her beside the chimney corner.

All this time the driver was unlading the wagon and bringing the things into the hall.

Amy, having well warmed herself and the children, looked around with satisfaction and also with surprise and curiosity.

The room was unfamiliar, not only in itself, but in its

furniture. At the two lofty front windows were rich and heavy, though old and faded, yellow damask curtains; on the walls hung many smoke-dried portraits in tarnished gilded frames; against the walls were ranged richly-carved, though worm-eaten old oaken tables and chairs; and drawn up on one side of the fire-place was a large sofa, covered with rich but faded yellow damask, like that which draped the window; on each side of the chimney were antique oaken cupboards, with glass doors.

Amy's eyes ranged over all these unfamiliar objects, and then turned upon Nancy.

"Oh yes, Miss Amy," said the woman in answer to that look. "Just so. When me and Marse Owen comed this morning, you may depend we didn't do nothing till we two roamed all over the house in search of the most comfor'ble room; and in doing it we comed across all this furnitur, layin' rottin' in the mould and damp; some in one place and some in another, and all like as they was hev away to rot. And so me and Marse Owen, we first went to work and we made a roarin' fire in this room which was one of the best. And then we cleaned it up and put down your carpet which you see only kivers this square place in front of the fire and doesn't look bigger'n a rug 'pared to this room! And then we went and toted all the best of that hev away furnitur' down into the hall; which the driver helped us with the heaviest things; and very kind it was of him. And we shook and brushed and dusted all on 'em and we ranged them here just as you see. And only look how comfor'ble!"

"Yes," said Amy, with a pleased expression of face, "I somehow like the old-fashioned aspect of every thing around me."

"And only look, Miss Amy, at them nice cupboards with glass doors each side of the fire-place!" said Nancy.

"Oh, yes, mother dear, look! When we unpack the boxes, we can put all our books in one cupboard as a book-

case; and our best crockery ware into the other as a sideboard; and how cozy that will be!"

"Yes," said Amy, smiling in sympathy with their satisfaction.

"And this good old sofa, mother dear. This is the best of all. How comfortable it will be for you to lie down on when you are so tired every day," continued Owen.

At this moment the driver came in, touched his hat, and reported that he had brought in all the rest of the furniture.

Amy thanked him and hospitably invited him to come in and warm himself and stop and get some supper.

But the man excused himself, saying that it was growing dark and he wanted to get home in good time. And with a second salute he left the house.

The tea-kettle was singing merrily on the hearth; and the table was set upon that square of carpet that had once quite covered Amy's little back parlor, but that looked like a mere rug in this large drawing-room.

Nancy began to slice some bread to make toast, and Owen went to examine the contents of the hamper sent by Mrs. Potts.

And with the united efforts of the woman and the boy, a better table was spread than Amy had seen since her widowhood. Fragrant tea and buttered toast; cold sliced ham and peach sweetmeats. The long ride through the pine forests, with its stimulating terebinthine odors, combined with the exhilarating winter air, had renewed Amy's appetite, so that she keenly enjoyed her repast.

When it was over and the service was washed up and arranged in the right-hand glass cupboard, Amy arose to make an inspection of her new quarters.

"Where have you put up my bed, Nancy?" she inquired.

"Here, honey," replied the woman, opening a door in the wall on the left side of the apartment, and leading her mistress into a bed-room about half the size of the draw-

ing-room. Here Amy found all her plain chamber furniture neatly arranged, and in the open fire-place a fine wood-fire burning.

"Oh, mother dear, isn't it fine to be able to have a fire in every room we use?" said Owen.

"It is indeed, my dear!" replied his mother, spreading out her hands before the genial blaze.

Amy was very tired, and the warm room, with its clean, soft bed, and bright, cheerful fire, was very inviting; so she said she thought she would go to rest for the night.

"But first I would like to see your room, Owen, dear," she added.

Owen opened a communicating door that stood exactly opposite the chimney, and admitted his mother into another room nearly corresponding in size and shape with her own—the only difference was that hers was back and his was front—both were parallel, and communicating with each other and with the long drawing-room.

"I took the front one because it was more exposed, mother dear; and gave you the back one because it was more retired and warmer and nearer to the kitchen."

"But why didn't you make a fire in your room, since there is such a plenty of wood?"

"Oh, mother dear, because when I am covered up warm in bed, I love to breathe the cold air. It makes me feel warmer."

Amy inspected Owen's chamber, and seeing that all was right, she returned to the drawing-room and called her little family together to ask the Divine blessing before retiring.

"Where are *you* going to sleep, Nancy?" she inquired, as they were about to part for the night.

"I just agwine to have a shake-down here right afore this blessed fire, as it would be a sin and a shame to leave all alone by itself for to-night. And to-morrow I gwine to fix up a room which is the housekeeper's room, joining of the kitchen."

"I hope you will rest well, Nancy. Good-night."

"Good-night, Miss Amy. Good-night, Marse Owen."

So they separated.

Early the next morning there was a generous emulation between Owen and Nancy as to who should expose himself or herself to the bitter winter weather in the necessary duty of hewing wood and drawing water.

The weather had changed during the night. The sky had clouded up. The snow was falling. And the north wind had arisen ar frozen all the streams. It was intensely cold. But that had not prevented Owen from turning out early. With all a boy's interest in a new abode, he sprang out of bed and dressed himself in haste and went into the drawing-room, which was already cleared of every sign of the shake-down; and made comfortable a glowing wood-fire and a neatly-spread breakfast table.

While Owen stood thawing out his half-frozen hands before the genial fire, Nancy entered with the icicles fringing her brown stuff skirts like a costly embroidery of diamonds, and in her hand the tea-kettle, which she sat on the hearth before the fire.

"Now, then, where have you been to get your gown so spangled, Nancy?" inquired Owen.

"Where? Why, down to the spring to fetch water to fill the kettle, to be sure!" answered the woman.

"Well, then, don't you do it again—that's all! I will bring the water, Nancy."

"Hoity-toity! why should you bring it?"

"Because it is more fitting that I should. I have little top-boots now, and I can tuck my trousers into them, and crunch through the snow without getting myself wet. But you—you go out with warm skirts, and the edges of them touch the snow and melt it, and get wet, and then get cold and freeze! And now look at them! Besides, you are a woman, and I am a boy, and for that reason I

ought to bring water and wood in bad weather, instead of you."

"I'm a woman, and you're a boy! One would think I was a child, and you was a man, to hear you talk! I 'spects how you'll think yourself master of the house next!"

"Well, Nancy, and so I am master of the house. I'm not saying but what my dear mother is the mistress of the house, and even the mistress over me. But, mind you! I am master, and have been so ever since my father died," Owen said.

Yes, and he meant it, too. For in many respects this little Owen was very unlike a certain young Ishmael we once knew—young Ishmael, who, in his despised childhood, and in his unconscious power, only aspired to be as great a man as the Professor of Odd Jobs, who was the greatest man of his acquaintance—young Ishmael, who only gradually learned his own vast powers of intellect and will as he developed their resources among his fellowmen.

Owen, from the first, under Divine Providence, believed in himself. His faith and his self-reliance was so far removed from doubt as to approach the opposite boundaries of presumption. If Owen had a fault it was egotism; but it was a fine and generous egotism, growing out of his great faith and self-reliance; an egotism that lifted him far above all petty selfishness; and that made him feel as though he was the natural protector of the women and children around him, and in some degree responsible for their well being.

But old Nancy could not understand all this. How could she? So she only stared at this self-asserting master of the house, and threatened to turn over a new leaf with him; to take him down a button-hole lower; to put him back in petticoats; and so forth.

In the middle of the discussion Amy came in and breakfast was served. This day being the Sabbath was spent

very quietly by Amy and her little household. They had morning service at home. And then Owen unpacked a few books suitable for Sunday reading, which employed their time. The snow-storm continued all day long.

On Monday the weather was still very cold and it was snowing and blowing at a tremendous rate, and no one could venture out; therefore Amy settled herself to her sewing with the two little sisters playing on the carpet at her feet; and Owen and Nancy went to work to complete the arrangements of their new abode. They brought in the cradle and Amy's work-stand and placed them near her, to be at hand when wanted. Then they fitted up Nancy's bed-room next to the kitchen. And then they sent the air-tight to a lumber room, for who would use an air-tight when they could have broad open fire-places and ten times more than enough wood to burn in them?

Owen unpacked the box of books and arranged them in the left-hand glass cupboard. And then unpacked the best crockery ware and set it in order in the right one. Finally he opened Mr. Spicer's box, which he found filled with potted meats, preserves and pickles; tongues and hams; jellies and jams; and a bottle of fine old port.

"Oh, mother, look here! This box of things was the children's, was it? I wonder if Mr. Spicer thought the two little sisters were going to eat ham and tongue and cheese and pickles, eh!" exclaimed Owen, in admiration.

Amy only smiled, and told him to put all the things except the ham and tongue in the cupboard with the crockery ware.

By evening all the arrangements were completed. And the family being very weary, went early to bed.

The next day Owen had to walk to town through all the snow to carry home some needle-work that his mother had finished for a customer and to bring back more.

But the fourth day hung so heavy on his hands, notwithstanding he brought all the wood and water, that he went

into the forest and cut pieces of cedar saplings and brought them home and began to carve busks for ladies' stays, saying that he would sell them when he went peddling; and that would be as soon as Mr. Lacy should return with his goods.

Ah! but when would Mr. Lacy return? Owen did not exactly know. He thought the time very long. After he had spent all his leisure for several days in carving out some dozen of busks, he concluded that he had more than enough to supply the market. But he thought that if his mother could draw him some patterns he could carve butter prints that would please the housekeepers whom he hoped to make his customers. Amy promised to draw the patterns. Owen shaped out the rude forms of a dozen prints. And upon the face of each Amy drew in pencil a rose, a harp, an eagle, a ship, or some other simple device, which Owen carefully carved out with his pen-knife. This took all his leisure for another week. And at the end of it Mr. Lacy had not arrived. The third week was spent by Owen in shaping out wooden spoons, butter paddles, potato mashers, and other light utensils, until at length he had completed quite an assortment of wooden ware of his own manufacture.

Do not imagine that this is a mere invention of the writer—I am *telling* a story, not *making* one. And one of the wealthiest merchants and most prominent men of New York told me that he had commenced life by carving and selling busks for ladies' stays, in the country neighborhood where he was born.

Twice a week Owen went to town to carry home his mother's finished needle-work to her customers, and to bring her back more to do. And every time he went, he called at Lacy's store to inquire of the young shopman who was in charge, whether the proprietor had been heard from, and when he was expected home. And he always received for an answer that Mr. Lacy had written that he

was coming home on the Sea-King; that he had not been heard from since; but that, doubtless, he would arrive when the boat should get in port. Sometimes he went from "Lacy's" to the "Elm Tree," to ask of his friend the hostess when the boat might be expected. And he was always answered by that laughing little goody, that the boat might be looked for when she was seen; for that wind and weather was against her, and there was no knowing when she would get into port.

And with these replies the boy was obliged to return to home and his carving, and be satisfied.

When Owen could find nothing else to do for his mother, he went into the village to hunt up some of their bad-paying old customers.

They had more than a hundred dollars of bad money on their books, counting in what was due the late doctor.

On the first day that Owen went collecting he took in five dollars. Then he borrowed a small market-basket from Mrs. Potts, and filled it with fresh meat and vegetables, and carried it home.

Amy, who for the week past had been living on her old diet of weak tea and dry bread, varied occasionally by a thin rasher from Mr. Spicer's sugar-cured ham, hailed these fresh provisions with as much surprise as satisfaction.

"And, how on earth did you get them, Owen?" she inquired.

Her son explained that he had collected five dollars of the bad money, and had spent one in a piece of lamb and a handful of spinach for his delicate mother.

"Oh! Owen, this is a great treat—so early in the season, too; and I am very glad to have it; and I know it will do me real good; but I am afraid, love, you dun people," said Amy, gravely.

"Yes, mother dear—I dun them—*well*, too," answered the boy, firmly.

"Oh! Owen, darling, you mustn't pester people for money."

"Won't I pester them neither, mother dear, when you want it so much to buy food! I'll pester the lives and souls out of them, see if I don't."

"Owen, Owen, you must not be so sharp."

"Mother, mother, what will become of you and the two little sisters if I am *not* sharp? You better believe I am going to be sharp as a needle!"

"Oh! Owen, I am sorry to hear you say so, my son. I could not bear the idea of your growing up to love money so much as to become a hard and cruel man!" exclaimed Amy, with emotion.

Her little son suddenly kneeled down by her side as she sat in her low sewing-chair. And he put his arms around her and laid his head sideways on her lap, and looking up in her face, said:

"Mother dear, I am not hard and cruel inside of myself. Listen, darling mother. There are some poor people who owed father for medicines Now I never troubled them. But there are other people well-to-do and careless; and I dunned them. Now this five dollars I worried out of the brew-house clerk, Bowling, who has plenty of money and, nobody but himself to keep; and who owed us fifteen dollars for Cologne water and scented soap and shaving-cream and such. Mother dear, poor and honest people may be spared; as for the prosperous and dishonest—yes, indeed, will I hunt and worry them; same as a terrier would rats!"

You see there was no maudlin sentimentality about this little fellow. He drew a clear and true line between justice and charity, and never by any chance got them confused. Gradually his self-reliance was beginning to influence his mother. She was learning to trust in him.

She made no further objection to his method of collecting his debts.

And from this time, every day, Owen walked to the village to call on these bad-paying customers. Although he himself termed his perseverance "worrying" or "dunning" or "pestering" them, yet in fact his manner towards them was always respectful, as that of a boy who had so much self-respect was sure to be.

At the end of the fourth week of their stay at the old house, and the first week of Owen's calls upon his mother's customers, Owen had collected about twenty-five dollars of the money that was owing.

CHAPTER XXII.

OWEN BEGINS BUSINESS.

He will dare all and bear all
And let no drop fall;
He will plot and contrive
A fortune to hive.—*From the German of Schiller.*

THE March winds were whistling shrilly through the pine forest, and the snow was frozen on the ground, when one Monday morning Owen went to town as usual to carry home his mother's work, to get more, and also to stir up the bad-paying old customers.

As he entered the village, he saw Mr. Spicer standing at his door, apparently waiting for him.

As Owen came up, the grocer beckoned to him and inquired:

"How is it, my boy, that you never come for any more groceries? Don't you mean to deal with me any longer?"

"If you please, sir, your parting gift has lasted us all this month past, so that we had no need to come. When it is gone I will come again."

"All right, my boy; the sooner the better. And how is all home?"

"Mother is a great deal better, thank you, sir. She—no, it is Nancy, I believe, that says so—Nancy says it is being free from great care, and living better, and also that it is the breath of the pine woods that is doing her so much good."

"Yes, the air of pine woods is a cure in itself for weak chests. Owen?"

"Yes, sir."

"I would like to walk out some Sunday after church to see for myself how you are getting on. Do you think your mother would care to see me?"

"Oh, sir, to be sure she would! Mother would be glad. Why, you are the best friend mother has got in the whole world; and she would be just as glad to see you as if—as if—as if——"

"As if I was her grandfather, Owen?"

"Yes, indeed, sir! that she would."

"Umph, umph, umph, umph."

"Shall I tell mother you are coming, sir?"

"Yes, Owen; tell her that I shall come out next Sunday evening after church, to see my little tiny sweetheart Gay. What a charming little creature she is! Like a buoyant bird with her springing and jumping."

"If you please, sir, don't you like Lily May, too?"

"Lily May? who is she?"

"The other poor little sister, sir. *She* is not like a bird. She is like a little angel from heaven, sir. I want you to like *her*, sir!"

"Lily May?—oh yes, of course! I like her very much, Owen! At least I am sure I shall be very fond of her when I see her."

"Thank you, sir."

"Owen?"

"Yes, sir?"

"I shall bring Bill out with me. I never leave Bill home by himself."

"Oh yes, sir, do, please! It is so beautiful out home. And Bill will like it. There are so many squirrels and snow birds—and they are so tame they will hardly go away when I come near them—what's that?—wasn't that the steamboat?" exclaimed the boy, suddenly breaking off and eagerly asking this question, as the sound of a deep-toned bell rang out upon the air.

"Yes, lad; the Sea-King is in port at last. She was stopped by the ice along shore; but she got in here at daybreak this morning."

"And Mr. Lacy on board?"

"Certainly, safe and sound with all his spring goods and new fashions; tell your lady friends."

"Then, if you please, sir, I must be off. I will give your message to mother, sir. And I am sure she will be glad to see you," said Owen, as he bowed and bounded off on his way to Mr. Lacy's store.

A great pile of boxes, of all shapes and sizes, nearly blocked up the side-walk before the door, and proved to Owen that the new goods had come.

Inside the store, between the two counters, were more boxes in course of being opened and emptied by Mr. Lacy and his shopman.

"How do you do, sir? I am so glad to see you back again at last," said Owen, taking off his hat, as he entered the store.

Mr. Lacy lifted his head and shoulders from the bottom of a deep box, and shook hands with his little friend.

"I am glad to meet *you*, Owen, so soon after my arrival! You don't let the grass grow under your feet, *you* don't, my boy!"

"You have the goods, I see, sir."

"Oh, yes! And your portion, also. But yours is all mixed up with mine in the various boxes, so that the whole of it cannot be got together at once. You must have patience, Owen."

"Yes, sir, I will. Please, when can I have the goods?"

"Late this evening or early to-morrow morning."

"Then I will come for them early to-morrow morning, sir. I am *very* glad you have got back safe, sir! Good-day!" And with a bow the boy left the shop and went on his way.

He carried his mother's finished work to the lady who employed her, got another parcel of the same sort, and then went and called at the "Elm Tree," to see if he could engage the cart the landlord kept for hire, to take his goods home the next morning.

Mrs. Potts saw him from the window of her private parlor; and she rushed out through a side door into the bar, and caught him by the arm and pulled him into her own room. And then she let him go, while she stood with her arms a-kimbo and panted.

And all this happened before Owen had time to speak.

"What business has a boy like you going into a bar-room?" she severely demanded, as soon as she could get her breath.

"Why, ma'am, I went in there only to——"

"Don't tell me! Hold your tongue! Boys *is* the devil! And I'm glad mine are all galls! What took you there?"

"If you please, ma'am, I went to——"

"Hold your tongue, I tell you, when I am speaking! You had no call to go there at all! Bars has been the ruin of many a man and many a boy! And it might be the ruin of you! And you a widow's son, too! I have asked you two or three times what took you there! And you haven't told me yet! Pray, can't you answer me, sir?"

"Yes, ma'am, indeed, if you will let me! I went in there to see Mr. Potts to hire a cart—or I mean——"

"You don't know what you mean! Boys is as prone to evil ways as cats is to mice! You keep away from bars!

Bars has ruined more boys and men than pulpits ever saved. I say it, and I stand to it, though I keep one myself. Why don't you tell me what took you there?"

"Ma'am, I am trying to. I went to engage a cart to take some goods home to-morrow morning. I thought I would bespeak it to-day, so as to be sure of it to-morrow!"

"Oh, you did, did you? Well, take my advice as has had a long experience of bars, and keep away from them. You're a widow's only son and only hope——"

"And two little sisters," said Owen.

"And so you ought to be very good. But just because you *are* a widow's only son, and an interesting sort of boy yourself, men and bar-rooms will try to be kind to you after their stupid fashion, which will be giving of you rum-and-sugar and the like! And I tell you what, my boy, you had better have the ill will of the evil-one himself, than the kindness of such blunder-headed fools."

"But, ma'am, indeed, no one ever gave me any rum, and I don't even know the taste of it."

"Don't tell me! Didn't I see what Ira Potts was up to just as soon as ever he saw you come in out of the cold? I saw him turn around to the bottle of peppermint-cordial and take it up. And he was just a-going to pour you out a glassful when I tore you away! And if I don't make him tremble in his shoes for trying to corrupt a lone widow's son, my name ain't Patience Potts, that's all. Go home to your mother, my lad, as fast as ever you can. And I will see that you have the cart as early as you want it to-morrow morning. And it sha'n't cost you any thing, neither; because we are just sending out to our farm for wood, and as it is in your neighborhood, and as the cart goes empty to return full, it may as well carry your things out."

Owen thanked the landlady, and bowed himself out. She made him leave by the "Ladies' Entrance," so as to avoid the bar-room.

Owen made three or four calls upon the "bad pay," and succeeded in collecting a few more dollars. He bought a breast of veal for his mother, and then started to walk home.

The supper had been kept back for him; and as it consisted only of the regulation weak tea and dry bread, Owen displayed his marketing, and the veal cutlets were soon dressed and added to the repast.

At supper Owen told the events of his day in the village. Amy rejoiced with him at the safe arrival of Mr. Lacy with the new goods; laughed with him at good Mrs. Potts's alarm; triumphed with him at the spoil recovered from the bad pay, and finally agreed with him to give Mr. Spicer and his boy a warm welcome and a good supper when they should come on Sunday.

Then Owen launched into the subject of his hopes and plans for the future; and in all of them he found his mother an interested listener and sympathizer.

And that night the boy retired full of hope.

Very early the next morning he set out to walk to the village, and in good time reached the "Elm Tree," where the cart stood ready to set out.

Mrs. Potts, who was watching for him through her window, now came to speak to him.

"I hope I didn't keep the cart waiting, ma'am?" said Owen.

"Oh, no, my boy! it has just driven around from the stable-yard. Although, Owen, my lad, I would have willingly kept it waiting for your sake. There now! jump up beside the driver and be off with you."

Owen thanked her, and obeyed her, and then requested the driver to drive to Mr. Lacy's store.

When they stopped there they saw a huge square box setting before the door. Mr. Lacy came out with a written paper in his hand.

"Good-morning, Owen."

"Good-morning, sir."

"Here, Owen, are your goods in this large box; and here in my hand is a list of the articles, with the wholesale price affixed to each item."

"Yes, sir; thank you."

"And now listen to me, Owen. Come this way."

Owen jumped out of the cart and followed Mr. Lacy out of hearing of the driver.

"Owen," he said, sinking his voice to a whisper, "attend to what I am going to say to you: *I* always charge thirty-three and a third per cent. on the wholesale price of every thing I sell in retail; but you may demand thirty-five."

"Justly, sir?"

"Yes, Owen, justly; else I would not favor your doing it."

"I know you would not, sir."

"Listen, and I will tell you why you may have a higher percentage on your goods than I have on mine. I sell to people who come to me to buy, and often come from long distances in the country, too; therefore I must sell at a moderate profit. But *you* travel far and wide through the country to wait upon people at their own houses. And in that way you save them time and trouble in coming to the village to deal, while you expend your own time and trouble in going to them. For your labor, as well as for your goods, you must be paid, Owen. And therefore you must have a high profit."

"Yes, sir—I see."

Mr. Lacy then called his porter to help the driver lift the large box on to the cart. And when it was done he shook hands with Owen, saying:

"Heaven bless you, my brave little fellow, and make you as successful as you certainly deserve to be."

Owen thanked him heartily and jumped to his seat beside the driver, and the cart was driven off.

On their way out of the village, Owen, ever sociable,

entered into conversation with the man, who told him that his—the man's—mistress had bought a farm out beyond Forest Lodge; and that a part of it lay in wild woodland, which she was having cleared, and she sent the cart every day to bring home the wood as it was cut, to be piled up in the inn-yard and used as fuel.

In due time they reached Forest Lodge, where the driver, with the help of Nancy, succeeded in lifting the large box from the cart and getting it by short stages into the house and then into the old drawing-room.

The driver then went on his way.

And Owen and Nancy, with hammer and chisel, contrived to rip off the top of the box and display the contents.

These at first view seemed to consist of other boxes of all sizes, shapes and colors—round boxes, square boxes, and long boxes; red boxes, blue boxes and yellow boxes. But when these in their turn were examined, it was discovered that the whole consignment comprised the best-selected assortment of goods that could possibly be thought of for a country pedler's pack.

First, every article in the lot was light, portable, indispensable to family comfort, and in daily requisition in every household, rich or poor. There were sewing materials of every description—needles, pins, scissors, thimbles; thread, cotton, silk and worsted; tape, cords, bobbin and brading. And there were writing materials—paper, pens and ink; pencils, wax and wafers. And there were dressing conveniences—combs, brushes, soaps, powders, pomatum and tooth-paste. And there was a light and portable assortment of dry-goods—book muslin for ladies' caps, laces, ribbons, pocket handkerchiefs, and so forth.

"Mother dear, I can easily carry twenty dollars' worth of these goods at a time, and I do think I shall make, in clear profit, three or four dollars a day."

"I think so too, Owen," said Amy.

"And oh, mother, I have just thought of something!"

said the boy, as he turned over a mass of nets, laces, and ribbons.

"What is it, Owen?"

"Why, that you have such a taste for making pretty things to wear; and here are so many more materials than I could carry out in a great while, so I just thought if you could stop doing that plain sewing, that tires you so much and brings you so little, and if you could make up some of this pretty lace and ribbon into ladies' caps and collars, it would be so much lighter and nicer to do, and would pay you so much better, for I would take them around with my other wares to sell."

"That is a very bright idea, Owen! I will act upon it at once," said Amy, eagerly.

And she selected some lace and net and ribbons, and carried them away to her work-stand by the fire.

"Are you going to begin *now*, mother?"

"Yes, dear! I really enjoy working on these pretty materials. And I can make up several sets of collars and sleeves to-day, so that you can take them out with you to-morrow. And if you succeed in selling them, Owen, I will only finish what plain sewing I have on hand, and then devote my leisure to this sort of work," said Amy, as her white fingers fluttered about among cobweb lace and bright-hued ribbons.

"And now I must make up my pack," said Owen, spreading a large piece of oil-cloth upon the floor, and laying a piece of white cotton over it to receive the miscellaneous articles.

"And I must go and see if my irons is hot! There's my ironing all waiting," said Nancy, starting to leave the room.

"No, you don't. Come here, Nancy! I want your advice. Help me to look over these things; and then you point out every thing that housekeepers can't possibly do without."

Nancy, well pleased to have her judgment appealed to, willingly let her work wait, while, with her arms a-kimbo, she stood over Owen's wares and watched and directed him in the making-up of his pack.

"Now, then, Nancy, what is the first thing wanted?"

"Lucifers!"

"Lucifers, Nancy? Why they are such trifles!"

"Don't care! When the snow's on the ground and the fire out, of a cold winter morning, in a lonesome country house, if there's one thing wanted more than another, it's lucifers."

"I know it, Nancy! There they are, then! A packet of one hundred boxes. What next, Nancy?"

Nancy told him what next. And she continued to watch the progress of his work and to give him her advice whenever it was asked, and sometimes to make suggestions when it was *not*.

And generally Owen followed her counsels, for one of the elements of his success was his willingness to be taught any thing that concerned his business by anybody who could teach him.

And so while Amy worked away busily and happily among the fine lace and gay ribbons, and Owen made up his pack, and Nancy gave her advice, the day passed away.

It was quite late in the afternoon when Owen finished *his* work, and strapped up his pack, and returned the rest of the goods to the big box, and with the help of Nancy dragged it from the drawing-room to his own chamber, where it would be out of the way.

"Now, then, mother dear, my pack is all ready. But I have left out a small bandbox to put these pretty things of yours in; and when you put them in, I can strap the box to the outside of my pack, so the things can't be rumpled," said Owen, standing beside his mother's workstand and watching her attractive work.

"Yes, dear; I wish to finish three sets of these sleeves

and collars—one with pink ribbon, one with blue, and one with yellow; and I shall be able to do it long before bed time," said Amy, sewing away.

Amy finished her task just as supper was ready to go on the table.

And soon after that the family retired to bed, so as to be up very early in the morning, to see Owen off.

Oh, but the next day was ushered in with a noteworthy wind! one of those winds in which "navies are stranded" and "forests are rended."

But it was not strong enough to prevent Owen from going forth to seek his fortune that day.

Nancy would have persuaded him to stop in the house.

"Child, it will blow the very hair offen your head. It's like battle, it is," she said.

And so it was! The old house shook as though it were bombarded; the windows rattled like discharges of musketry; the doors and shutters banged and thundered like bombshells.

But Owen declared that he rather liked the row than otherwise.

Amy secretly wished her little son to stay home; but she refrained from laying her commands on him to do so.

So directly after breakfast Owen put on his cloak and cap, strapped his pack upon his shoulders, kissed everybody all round, and gleefully set forth.

Amy and Nancy stood at the window and watched him as he crunched on over the hard frozen snow against the north wind, with his pack on his back, his cloak blown about him, and his head bent to the blast.

Nancy spoke:

"Tell you what, Miss Amy, child, that boy is gone to seek his fortune, and mind what I tell you—He'll *find* his fortune!"

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE LITTLE PEDLER.

Welcome he is in hut and hall,
To maids and matrons, squire and peasant,
Winning the sympathies of all,
Shedding sunshine by his presence.—*Praed.*

THE beginning of Owen's journey was like the beginning of his life—frosty, yet hopeful, boisterous, yet bright.

He toiled along bravely over the snow and against the wind. And to many a lonely country house on that stormy March morning, the bright boy, rosy with health and beaming with hope, was destined to bring cheerfulness; to many a solitary invalid, recreation; to many a circle of moody women, moping in close rooms, amusement.

The first place he called at was known as the "House on the Hill."

It was inhabited by a gentleman farmer and his five daughters, young ladies whose ages ranged from fifteen to five-and-twenty years.

They kept a big bull-dog called by the attractive name of "Slayer," and notorious throughout the neighborhood for his ferocity.

But somehow or other our Owen was not afraid of the brute. Perhaps his faith extended even to dogs, and he had confidence in the latent good feelings of Slayer. At any rate he walked straight up to the gate, and opened it as Slayer made a fierce onslaught from the opposite side of the yard.

But the perfect fearlessness with which the brave boy received the shock, and the perfect friendliness with which he stretched out his gloved hand to pat the brute on the head, so acted on that brute's nature that he immediately

reformed his manners and jumped and barked around Owen in the most cordial manner; and, finally, after making a thousand apologies in dog language for having been so hasty as to mistake a hero for a rascal, he walked by the boy's side, proudly escorting him to the house.

Apparently the barking of the dog had attracted the notice of those within, for the door was already opened and one of the young ladies was standing within it—her clothes and her flaxen curls all blown into disorder by the rushing of the wind.

"I told that neglectful fellow, Joe, to chain up that dog during the day; but he never minds what I say to him! I declare I will get papa to give him a good talking-to! Somebody will be torn to pieces by that brute next! Did he bite you, little boy?" she said, as Owen approached.

"*Did* I bite you, little boy?" asked the big, tawny eyes of Slayer, putting on an injured look.

Owen patted the dog's head in answer to his mute appeal, and then replied to the young lady:

"Oh dear no, Miss, thank you! Slayer—I know his name, because I have heard of him—Slayer and I understand one another. Don't we, Slayer?"

"We don't do any thing else!" was Slayer's reply, expressed, not in these articulated words, but by licking the hand of his new friend.

"Come in out of the cold, little boy, and tell me what you came for," said the young lady, shivering, and holding the door wider.

"I came to show you my wares, Miss, if you will be so good as to look at them," replied Owen, as he entered and politely closed the door.

"Wares—why, are you a pedler?" exclaimed the young lady, in surprise, as her eyes brightened.

"Yes, Miss, if you please."

"So young as you are!"

"If you please, Miss, I am not so very young, and I shall grow older every day," said Owen, archly.

"Every hour, if you go on at this rate! Come into our room and let us look at what you have to sell," she continued, leading the way into a spacious back-parlor where there were four other young ladies at work, some with knitting and some with embroidery.

"Girls! what do you think? Here's a pedler!" said the first young lady.

"That was what made the dog bark, I suppose, Lizzy," said one of the others.

"Yes, it was. Come in, little boy!"

"Goodness me. Is *that* the pedler? *That* little fellow?" exclaimed the girls, in a breath.

"Yes! a brave little lad, isn't he?"

"Why it is a wonder the dog did not tear him, limb from limb! How in the world did he escape?" inquired one.

"It seems that the little fellow conciliated the dog; for they came walking up to the house together on the most friendly footing," said Miss Lizzy.

"How did you make friends with the surly beast, little boy?" asked another.

"I only spoke to him and patted him on the head, Miss, and he seemed to think it was all right. If you please, may I show you my wares now?"

"Certainly. So you are really a pedler?"

"Yes, Miss."

"But are you not afraid?"

"No, Miss. There is nothing to be afraid of."

"Ah! there isn't, isn't there? Don't you know the last pedler, the very last we ever had—we had no other since, for it seems that men have been afraid to try it again—was murdered and robbed in these woods below here, about a year ago."

"Yes, Miss, I know it, but I am not afraid."

"Not afraid? You are a bold boy! why are you not afraid?" inquired Miss Lizzy.

"Why, Miss, my mother always taught me to trust in the Lord. And I do. But I don't think there is any danger. Pedlers have been travelling this neighborhood for hundreds of years. And I never heard of but that one being killed. Nobody is going to make a practice of killing pedlers, Miss."

"But you are so small."

"I don't think that makes any difference, Miss. These are my wares. I hope some of them may suit you."

"Come along, girls; let's look at these," said Miss Lizzy.

And the young ladies knelt down around Owen's pack, and began to tumble over his laces and ribbons to their hearts' content.

"It is refreshing to have a pedler come among us again! And such a bright little fellow as this is, too!" said one who was busiest of all with the pack.

"I wish they would stop calling me little fellow. I am not so *very* little!" thought Owen, as he drew himself up.

"You have some very nice things here, little boy," said Miss Lizzy, immediately offending in the same way.

"Yes, Miss. My name is Owen Wynne, please."

"Owen Wynne! Well, I am glad to know your name. What have you got in this flat paper box?"

"Under-sleeves and collars, Miss," said the boy, opening the box and displaying his mother's work.

"Oh, girls! look! what beautiful things! You can't get such things as these in the village, I know! Where did these come from, Owen—from New York?" inquired Miss Lizzy.

"No, Miss, my mother made them."

"Indeed! Look, girls! what delicate work! How many sets are there—three? I think we will take them

all. I wish there were five sets, and then we could have a set each; but there are no more in your pack."

"No, Miss; but I can bring you two more sets—let me see—on Saturday."

"Do, then, Owen. That will be quite time enough, for we shall not wish to wear them until Sunday."

"In what colors shall they be trimmed, Miss?"

There was a consultation among the girls, and then Miss Lizzy answered:

"One in green and one in purple, Owen."

"Very well, Miss; I will remember."

They made several other purchases, and then kindly dismissed their little tradesman.

Miss Lizzy herself let him out of the door, and Slayer escorted him to the outer gate, and even offered to attend him in his farther walk. But Owen shut him in.

His next customer was a very rich and very sickly lady, who was confined to her chamber by a chronic malady; and to her the visit of the bright, rosy boy, with his attractive wares, seemed a real relief. She talked with him a good while, pulled over his wares a great deal, and then compensated him by buying a large quantity.

His third patron was an old lady who lived in a lonely house with an old servant and an old cat, and whom the boy found in the very act of bemoaning her hard fate because she had no snuff, and no way of getting to the village to buy any. Owen immediately offered to supply her, and the old lady, for fear that another bad spell of weather might catch her without snuff, forthwith bought his whole stock in trade of that article.

But it was not only to the houses of the prosperous that the boy brought pleasure and services, but to the hovels of the poor. To them his sales were few and his profits small, but he served them not the less readily. He even made some donations—warm neck handkerchiefs to poor old women, and a pair of iron-bound spectacles to a poor old

man: thank-offerings, Owen called them, for his own success.

The sun was setting clear, and the wind had lulled, when Owen, with an empty pack and a full pocket, turned his steps homeward.

"Hurrah! mother, dear! hurrah, Nancy! hurrah, Gay! hurrah, Lily May! Sold out to the very last paper of pins!" exclaimed the boy, bursting into the room, and flourishing the empty oil-cloth that had covered his pack.

"Have you, really, dear? That was great good fortune!" said Amy, receiving him in her arms, and kissing him.

"Sold out entirely, mother! And oh! your lace collars and under-sleeves didn't take at all, they didn't!"

"Didn't they, Owen? I am sorry for that."

"Didn't they, though! Why, mother, I sold all three at the first place I called—the House on the Hill—and got orders for two more sets to be done by Saturday. And I could have sold a dozen sets to-day if I had had them!"

"Sets! sets! You *set* right down and thaw yourself out, while I get supper, or you'll be having of a *set*-tled cold or something," said Nancy.

Owen laughed, but obeyed her, as he almost always did.

"So my work *did* take, after all, did it, you monkey?" said Amy.

"Well, it did a little, mother. And I promised two more sets by Saturday. I thought that would be giving you time enough."

"Why, I can make them up this evening. It will only be amusement for me, after that tedious plain sewing that has occupied me all day. I will commence them directly after tea."

"They are to be trimmed—one set with green and one with purple, mother. Those young ladies like all the colors of the rainbow."

"Very well, Owen—they shall be pleased."

Such was the history of Owen's first day of trade; and his subsequent days were very like it.

By Saturday night he had sold out a quarter of his whole stock, including several sets of collars and sleeves of his mother's manufacture. And he had taken in twenty-five dollars, with a clear profit of ten.

"It is very plain to me, Owen dear, that you only need more bodily strength and more capital to make your fortune," said Amy.

"All that is coming, mother," answered the boy. "In a month I shall have sold out all my stock, and, with the help of your work, I shall have nearly doubled my money. Then I must send and buy a larger stock of goods, with which, and with your work upon the materials, mother, I shall again nearly double my money; so you see how my capital must increase."

"Yes, but your strength, Owen?"

"Oh, mother, that will increase too! But if it does not in proportion to my business, you know I must set up a pony! and after a while a horse and wagon!"

Amy smiled at his plans, but said nothing to discourage them.

Sunday came.

The one single drawback to Amy's satisfaction in living at Forest Lodge was that she could not get to church, the distance being much too great for her strength.

But Owen went to church in the morning, and Nancy in the afternoon.

In the evening, after the last services of the day, Mr. Spicer came out, bringing with him his son, according to promise. Amy received him with grateful cordiality Little Gay made friends with him again. And he himself, in memory of his pledge to Owen, tried to cultivate the acquaintance of Lily May.

Owen took Bill all over the house and grounds to show him their wonders.

And Nancy prepared a good supper for the whole party.

Finally, after a very pleasant evening spent with his friends, the big grocer and his little son walked home, with the impression on both their minds that they had been to see their near relations.

The next week, Amy having finished all the plain sewing that she had engaged to do, declined to take in any more. And she devoted all her leisure time to the lighter, more elegant, and more profitable fancy-work for Owen's pack.

And Owen plied his trade with unremitting diligence.

Better living, lighter work, and the breath of the pine forest—all these influences combined to improve Amy's health, even before the opening of the spring.

By the first of April Owen had sold out his whole stock. He had now over a hundred dollars of his own to invest in a new stock. And he went into the village to consult Mr. Lacy.

Mr. Lacy willingly gave him the best counsel he could. And Owen, acting upon it, sent his money to New York in a letter addressed to the wholesale jobber who supplied Mr. Lacy. And in due time he received his second consignment of goods. And he started on his peddling tour again.

There are fluctuations in trade. And this campaign was not quite as prosperous as the first had been; probably because the weather was now fine and the travelling good, so that people could go into the village to buy what they wanted.

Still, Owen succeeded fairly enough. And by the middle of May he sent two hundred dollars to New York and received its value in a new set of goods, with which he immediately commenced what might be called his third campaign.

CHAPTER XXIV.

RISING.

He's fair without, but sound within,
His heart is boldly true:
His young limbs strong, his shoulders broad,
His hands are made to do.
He toils at morn, he toils at eve,
His work is never through;
Another day of cheerful toil
Is ever on his view.
And on he trudges, keeping aye
A stout heart to the brae;
And proud to be an honest soul
Until his dying day.—*Nicoll.*

The spring opened beautifully in the wooded country around Forest Lodge. The pine trees put forth fresh green buds and leaves. And the acacias that stood nearer to the house burst into full bloom, and uniting their rich fragrance with the odor of the pines, filled all the air with a delicious aroma. Later, the fruit trees and bushes blossomed and the roses blowed.

On fine days Amy walked in the grounds and amused herself with tending such flowers as remained in the neglected spot.

And every day Nancy, as soon as her housework was through, busied herself in the old disused garden—spading, hoeing, and raking beds and planting seeds.

Owen sometimes longed to be at work there, too; and would turn away with a sigh as he started each morning with his pack on his back. But Owen's specialty was trading, and he knew that at the commencement of his struggles concentration upon that one thing was most essential to his success.

During these pleasant days of the early summer, Mr.

Spicer made his second visit to Amy and her little family. Very discreet had Mr. Spicer been in availing himself of their hospitality. He did not wish to alarm Amy, or to set the gossips of the village talking, by visiting Forest Lodge too often. So he let nearly two months elapse before he came again.

It was on one beautiful Sunday evening, when Amy and the two little sisters were out on the old porch, she reading the Bible and they playing with each other, that the stout grocer, with his little son by the hand, was seen coming through the shrubbery, straight to the house.

"Are we welcome, Mrs. Wynne?" he inquired, with a smile, as he stepped upon the porch.

"Very welcome, Mr. Spicer," said Amy, rising and holding out her hand. "How do you do, Willie?" she said, shaking hands with the boy in his turn.

"Where's Owen, ma'am?" inquired that young gentleman.

"In the garden drawing fresh radishes for supper," said Amy, with a smile.

Bill was off like a shot in search of his friend.

At Amy's invitation, Mr. Spicer sat down on the bench opposite to her; put his hat beside him, and, by way of opening a conversation, remarked:

"We had a very fine sermon this afternoon from our minister, Mrs. Wynne."

"Yes, I suppose so; Mr. Morley's sermons are always good; and it is one of my greatest present troubles that I cannot get to hear him. What was the subject of his last one?"

"Special providence. And if you like I think I can give you the whole of that sermon, almost word for word; for I have a good memory, though not a long one. And what I could do now I couldn't do a week hence."

"I should be much obliged, Mr. Spicer, if it would not give you too much trouble."

"Of course it wouldn't. And besides, repeating it to you will serve to fix it in my memory, and really I don't wish to forget it."

Now this proposition to give a whole sermon second-hand would have been rather appalling to most persons; but to Amy, who admired her old minister, and who had not heard him preach for months, it was pleasing.

While the grocer was still rehearsing, Nancy, who had also been to church that afternoon, but had stopped on her way home to gossip with an acquaintance, now came walking briskly up.

Nancy gave the visitor as cordial a welcome as respect would allow; and then hastened into the house to prepare supper. Nancy had a theory of her own respecting Mr. Spicer's visits, few and far between as they were; and she liked her theory; but she held her tongue about it.

Mr. Spicer had just arrived at "thirdly and lastly," when Owen and Bill came in with fresh pink radishes, and pearly young onions, all arranged on large cabbage leaves.

"Mother dear, Bill told me his pa liked young onions, and so I drew them."

"Quite right, Owen."

"Come on, Bill! Nancy won't mind us boys going into the kitchen. She is not cross like some cooks, you know."

And so saying, Owen hurried in, followed by his friend.

In due time Nancy had a nice early supper arranged upon the table. And Owen called his mother and the visitor into the house.

After supper Mr. Spicer produced a book that he had brought with him: "The life of Martin Luther." And he proposed, if agreeable to Mrs. Wynne, that Owen should read aloud for the amusement of the others. Amy assented, and Owen began.

They were all seated around the table on the square of carpet, in the middle of the room—Amy on one side, with

Bill beside her. And Mr. Spicer on the opposite side And Owen between him and the others.

Owen was an excellent reader, and the book was very interesting. But truth to tell, Mr. Spicer heard but little of the subject. He was furtively watching Amy, as she sat there hushing Gay to sleep.

Amy's health seemed much better, but was it permanently so? Who does not know the deceitful nature of consumption, with its fluctuations of better and worse? That deep hectic flush on her cheeks and that feverish brilliancy of eyes, that made Amy look so beautiful to-night, were not favorable indications. And even if she should recover her health—as some consumptives certainly have done after all—would she ever feel reconciled to the loss of her late husband, torn from her in such a dreadful manner? The traces of deep and settled grief noticeable beneath every superficial change of expression in her beautiful countenance seemed to answer, No! Well, though she might ever cherish his memory with the tenderest affection, and respect, still might she not be brought at last, after a long time, to tolerate—— Oh, no! no! the fixed constancy in that lovely face assured one, never! "Well," said the grocer to himself with a sigh, "I can be her good friend, and never by any word or act permit her to suspect that I ever dreamed of being any thing else."

"And about this time Martin Luther was sent to school to Magdeburg, where his poverty was so extreme that he had, in company with other boys, to traverse the country singing hymns at the houses as a means of procuring a supply of victuals."

These were the words read aloud by Owen, that finally roused the grocer from his dream, and brought his attention to the book.

At ten o'clock, the grocer took a friendly leave of the

little family, and, with his son by the hand, started for home.

As soon as her visitors were gone, Amy looked up, and said:

"Shut up the house, Owen, and bring the Bible. We will have prayers, and go to bed."

"Mother, dear!" said the boy, in a voice so solemn that Amy turned towards him in uneasiness, which was much increased when she saw that his face was very pale and grave.

"What is it, Owen?"

"Mother, dear, I—I have found something."

"Found—what, Owen?"

"At least, Bill Spicer and I found it together."

"What *was* it, Owen?"

The boy shivered and shook, and, in attempting to answer, choked.

"For goodness sake, what is the matter with you, child?" asked Amy, in surprise and anxiety.

"Oh, mother, I will—I will tell you presently! It is something I found—in a cupboard—in the old room over the kitchen."

"Well, Owen?" said his mother, seeing that he trembled and hesitated.

"You know, I took Bill Spicer all over the house, to show it to him?"

"Yes; well?"

"And went into that room, and we opened that cupboard, and we found *it* in the bottom of the cupboard along with an empty inkstand and an old candlestick and——"

"Owen, love, it seems to me that you are putting off telling me something that you dread to tell. Now, what is it? Be a man, and answer me at once. Surely, you are not afraid to say any thing to your own mother?"

"Mother, mother dear," recommenced Owen, in great agitation, "when my father was found, what was missing from his pockets?"

"Owen, every thing: his watch, purse, pocket-handkerchief, instrument-case, and all. What is it that you have found, Owen?" gasped Amy.

"Oh, mother, mother dear, look at this!" said the boy, drawing from his bosom and laying before her the late Doctor Wynne's pocket-case of instruments, with his name engraved on the little silver shield that formed the clasp.

"Oh, Heaven!" cried Amy, sinking back in her chair, and growing so deadly pale that Nancy thought she had fainted, and flew to her aid.

"No, no; I shall get over this in a moment," she breathed, rejecting Nancy's proffered assistance. "Owen, come here! Where did you get this?"

"Darling mother," said the boy, tenderly, "I told you. Bill and I were rummaging through the old rooms, out of curiosity to see what we could find, and we turned up this in a lot of rubbish in the bottom of the cupboard in the room over the kitchen."

"How—came—it—there?" slowly questioned Amy,—speaking more to herself than to another.

But neither herself nor another could answer this question.

"He always carried it with him. He took it with him the night of his death; for I remember well seeing him put it into his pocket directly after supper, for fear he should forget it," said Amy, thoughtfully.

"I, too, mother dear. I saw him do it," added Owen.

"And you have kept that witness in your bosom all this evening without letting me know that you had it?" inquired Amy.

"Oh yes, mother dear. It was hard to keep it to myself so long, and it was very hard to look as if nothing was the matter. But I thought it would be wrong to tell you of it before our company was gone. And so I *did* keep it safe in my bosom."

"And you did right, my boy. But, little Spicer! Didn't he know what it was?"

"No, dear mother; for though, at the sight of it so suddenly, indeed I felt as if some one had struck me a blow, I kept it to myself. I said: 'This is ours, Bill,' and put it in my bosom."

"This then is the first link in the chain of evidence that may lead to the apprehension of the murderer," said Amy to herself.

"Mother dear," said Owen, again so solemnly that Amy started and looked at him in anxiety. What was coming next?

—"That was not all I found," added Owen.

"Then tell me what else," cried Amy, quickly; "tell me at once! do not be afraid——"

"I found this, dear mother; and this," said the boy, drawing from his pocket and laying before her a soiled pocket-handkerchief and an old purse.

"His! his! both his!" cried Amy, pressing the relics to her lips and to her heart. "The purse that I knit for him the month before we were married, and that he always would carry in preference to any other! And the handkerchief I marked for him the day before he died. Oh, Hugh! Oh! my dear, dear Hugh! Why didn't my heart break when I lost you! Why don't it break now! Oh, Heaven have pity on me!" cried Amy, and, overcome by this sudden revival of her grief, she burst into a passionate fit of sobs and tears.

Owen began to caress her, and Nancy to scold her. But both acted in vain. The flood of grief had to take its course. And when it had exhausted its violence, Amy looked up and said:

"Light a candle and come with me, Nancy. We must go and examine that room."

Nancy produced the light and Owen led the way to the room over the kitchen. It was a large, dilapidated, ghostly-

looking place, with the plastering broken and fallen in many places, and the glass out of the windows and the doors off the hinges. There was an old sunken fire-place, with a cupboard on each side of it. And there was a broken-down cot-bedstead, a creaky wash-stand and a few ricketty chairs.

Amy carefully examined all these articles of furniture, and then inspected the cupboards. In the one where the relics had been found there was nothing but what Owen had described—an empty ink-stand, an old candle-stick, waste paper, straw, dust, rags. But in the other there was a pair of large top-boots and an old rimless hat.

"This room has been occupied by a *man*," said Amy, adding with a shudder: "and probably by the murderer."

Owen, pale with awe, went to his mother's side and took her hand, pressed it and continued to hold it within his own; but he said nothing.

"Come down, Miss Amy, honey. No use you stopping up here, catching of a cold in the damp, mouldy old room, and giving of yourself the horrors besides. Come down, honey, and say your prayers and go to bed."

"Yes, I will, Nancy—I will. For if ever I needed prayer, and rest too, it is now—it is now," groaned Amy, as she turned to leave the place.

When she reached the old drawing-room, Owen brought her the Bible. And she opened it and read a psalm; and then she knelt and led in prayer.

When their evening devotions were over she silently kissed Owen and put the relics into her bosom and went to bed.

But could Amy sleep that night?

Ah, no! For the whole night through she lay weeping over those memorials that had brought her husband so vividly before her mind again, and wondering how she had best employ them to bring his murderer to justice.

In the morning Amy appeared at the early breakfast-

table looking so pale and haggard that Owen immediately exclaimed:

"Mother dear, you have been worrying yourself about those things I found. Do try not to worry, dear mother."

"I will try not to, Owen," she replied.

And to avoid troubling her little son, she put a strong constraint upon herself and assumed a cheerful aspect.

Owen, as soon as breakfast was over, strapped his pack upon his back and came to kiss his mother before going on his daily journey.

"Here I am, mother dear, like Atlas with the globe on his back, or Sinbad the Sailor with the Old Man of the Sea; or, what is still nearer home, like Christian with his bundle of sin," said the boy, as he straightened himself up under his burden and marched off.

As soon as he was gone Amy called to her servant, who was busy in the kitchen sorting out the clothes for the week's wash.

"Nancy, come in here; I want to speak to you."

"Yes, honey! speak quick! that's a dear! 'cause I want to hop right into the wash-tub and get these clothes out afore dinner," said the woman, hurrying into the room, with her sleeves rolled up, and standing as if she was ready to hurry off again.

"Never mind the clothes to-day, Nancy; I have something else for you to do," said her mistress.

"Never mind the clothes! Hi, Miss Amy! You know well enough if I don't wash out the clothes a Monday morning, it puts me wrong the whole week."

"I have something of more importance than the washing for you to do, Nancy."

"Of more importance than the washing! Well, Lord! I should like to be informed what's of more importance than the washing, if any thing. 'Taint the cooking, nor likewise the sewing, 'cause both them has perpetual to give up to it," said Nancy, with her arms a-kimbo.

"I want you to walk to the village, and ask Mrs. Potts to please to lend me her gig for three or four hours to go to town in. Tell her that business of the greatest urgency requires me to go there, and that I am not able to walk one quarter of the distance. Tell her that but for this urgent business I would not ask such an unreasonable favor," said Amy.

"Oh! I'll go; and I'll tell her; but I know well enough what this unctuous business is, Miss Amy. It's to go to a magister, and tell him about finding them rellucks; isn't it, now?"

"Yes, Nancy, it is. And now that you know all about it, I hope you will do my errand promptly."

"Oh! yes; I'll do it pompously enough, for that matter. Never fear me. But I'll tell you what, Miss Amy: you'll have to stop fretting."

"Oh! Nancy, it was only last night that I fretted so much; on first seeing the familiar things, you know. It brought every thing fresh before my mind again, as if it had happened yesterday. But I have done fretting now, Nancy. I have a duty to do—to bring the murderer to justice," replied her mistress.

Nancy hurried out to get ready for her walk.

And Amy, drawn by a natural attraction to the room where the relics were found, went up the back stairs, and renewed her search there.

And she spent the two or three hours of Nancy's absence in a minute examination of the place. But she found no more than upon her former examination.

Nancy came back a full hour before she was expected. She arrived seated in the gig, with Mrs. Potts for a driver.

"I couldn't help it, my dear life! As soon as ever Nancy told me you wanted the gig for something important I screwed the rest out of her. And if she isn't the hardest flint to screw any thing out of that ever I saw, I'll give up!" said the good creature, dropping out of the gig,

and running up to the porch to kiss Amy, whom the sound of wheels had brought to the door.

"How good of you to come yourself!" said Amy, returning her kiss, and drawing her into the house.

"I couldn't *help* it, I tell you, child. I *had* to come. Besides, who was there to drive you to town, and take care of you when there?"

Amy kissed her hand for an answer.

"And so you found the doctor's snuff-box and spectacle-case and cravat in an old closet over the kitchen!"

"No, dear Mrs. Potts; it was his poor dear pocket-case of instruments, and his purse, and his handkerchief."

"Ah, well, all the same; they were his. And what a turn it must have given you, child!"

"Oh! it did; it did, indeed," said Amy, in a choking voice, as the tears started to her eyes.

"There now, don't cry. Go get your bonnet and mantilla on, and let's go. The ride will do you good."

Amy set some ripe strawberries and a pitcher of cream before her guest, and then went and got ready for the ride.

"Take care of the children, Nancy," said Amy, as she climbed into the seat beside the good little landlady, who immediately touched up her old horse, which instantly started off in a brisk trot.

This was the first ride Amy had taken for many months, and despite the gloom of the errand she was going upon she enjoyed it very much. Most of the road lay through the forest, now rich in all the luxuriant beauty of summer.

When they arrived at the village, they drove first to the parsonage. They found the Reverend Mr. Morley at home. The pastor met Amy and her friend with great cordiality and pressed them to alight and come into the house. But Amy, in a low voice, explained the grave business that had brought her to town and requested him to meet her at the magistrate's office, whither she was going to report the dis-

covery of these relics and to seek advice as to what steps should be taken with regard to them.

Mr. Morley promised all that Amy asked.

And then she left her love for Mrs. Morley. And the gig moved on.

"And now, I s'pose, straight for Squire Allen's office," said Mrs. Potts.

"Yes," said Amy.

Five minutes drive brought them to the office, around which there was the usual crowd of stragglers.

"Will you go in with me? Can you leave your horse? Will he stand?" asked Amy, breathlessly; for she felt frightened at the idea of pushing her way alone through that crowd of disreputable-looking men.

"Stand? why, he'd stand forever, this one would! Lord bless you, child, the trouble with *him* is not to get him to *stand*, but to get him to *go!* Only I know the secret to start him," said Roly-poly, dropping herself out of the gig in a lump and then holding up her fat hands to help Amy out. She drew Amy's slender arm through her own plump one, and led her through the crowd into the magistrate's office. The crowd was all left outside. The office was nearly empty. There was no one within, except the magistrate himself, who was reading a newspaper; the magistrate's clerk, who was twiddling his thumbs; and a constable, who was in attendance upon both.

Mr. Allen's office was in fact almost a sinecure; for you see Rogues' Harbor, like most other named places in the world, was a sad misnomer; in it there was a plentiful lack of rogues as well as a great number of honest people.

Mr. Allen arose and stared with surprise to see two well-dressed women come into his office.

But Mrs. Potts, dragging Amy along with her, rolled herself up in front of the table, and proclaimed:

"Mrs. Wynne, your worship, which has some urgent business with you."

Squire Allen, slowly laid his newspaper aside; set his spectacles up on top of his head, and greeted Mrs. Wynne.

Amy essayed to speak and explain her business, but agitation choked her voice and stopped her speech.

Mrs. Potts then took upon herself the office of explanation.

"If you please, sir, it is about the poor, dear, deceased, departed, as was mysteriously made way with by them there rep'rate runaways."

"What about him? It is of the late Doctor Wynne, I presume, you speak?" said Mr. Allen.

"Yes, your worship, of the self-same, said person."

"Has any thing been discovered in relation to the murder?" anxiously demanded Mr. Allen.

"Yes, sir," replied Amy, who had now conquered her agitation and come forward to answer for herself—"Yes, sir—these little effects, which were upon his person when he left home on the night of his death; but which were missing when his body was found." And so saying, she laid upon the table the articles in question.

"Where were these found, and by whom?" inquired the magistrate, taking them up and looking at them with deep interest.

Amy told him.

"Oh!" exclaimed the magistrate, with a look of disappointment. "Probably left there by some of that band that might have made the half-ruined old house their shelter."

Amy raised her eyes to his face with a questioning glance. She was not satisfied.

While the magistrate was looking at them, Mr. Morley walked in.

"Good-morning, Mr. Allen. I came here at Mrs. Wynne's request, to assist in the investigation of this business of the discovered relics. What do you make of this discovery?" he said, advancing to the table.

"Why, sir, to tell the truth, I fear that it leads us no nearer to the secret than we were before. It was pretty well ascertained that Doctor Wynne fell a victim to some of that ferocious band of runaway negroes. Now, what more likely than that a part, or the whole, of that band might have taken refuge in that old, solitary, and uninhabited house, and left these relics there? I can in no other manner account for their being found where they were," answered the magistrate.

"And you think they were left there by the runaway negroes, sir?" inquired Amy.

"I certainly do, madam," answered the magistrate.

"And I also think it highly probable, Mrs. Wynne," said Mr. Morley.

"Then we are, in truth, as far from the discovery of the murderers as ever?" said Amy, sadly.

"Just as far, madam," said the magistrate.

"Just as far, Mrs. Wynne, my child," added the minister.

Amy could scarcely refrain from bursting into tears.

Mr. Allen saw it, and said:

"However, I can send McGinness, one of our constables, over to examine the premises. He is a very shrewd fellow, almost equal to a metropolitan detective; he may ferret out something to lead us to the haunts of the band, and perhaps to the identical member of it that did this deed."

"Ah! I would be so much obliged if you would, sir," said Amy, rising to depart.

"And as for me, my dear Mrs. Wynne, I am really very sorry that these effects have been found at all, since they seem only uselessly to have harrowed up your feelings. My little friend Owen did not act with his usual long-headedness when he produced them."

"My little son, Mr. Morley, has no secrets from me," answered Amy, gently, as she gave her hand to the minister, bowed to the magistrate, and turned to leave the office.

"And now, my dear, we will drive up to the Elm Tree

and have dinner before we go back," said the landlady, when they were seated again in the gig.

"Oh, but Mrs. Potts, I must go back to the children," said Amy.

"Oh, but my dear, you must go to dinner first. It's young ducks and green peas, asparagus, and new potatoes, and custard-pudding and calf's-foot jelly. I ordered it afore I left home, a purpose for you."

Always hungry and always thirsty, no matter what was afoot, this poor consumptive woman—consumptive in more senses than one—at length accepted the good landlady's invitation, and they went to the Elm Tree to dinner.

After which Mrs. Potts put her guest again into the gig, tumbled up beside her, touched up the old horse, and started at a smart pace for Forest Lodge, where, after an hour's drive through the woods on that pleasant summer afternoon, they arrived.

Mrs. Potts would not be persuaded to get out; for she said that she must go home to keep Ira Potts and his customers in order. And so she kissed Amy, touched up her horse once more, and started for town.

When Owen came home that night, Amy told him of her visit to the village and of its result.

"Mother dear," said the boy, gravely, "remember what Mr. Morley said to you months and months ago—'Let the dead past bury its dead;' trouble not your spirit by seeking vengeance. In His own good time, God will surely bring the guilty into judgment. Do you remember, mother dear? The words are Mr. Morley's, not mine."

"I remember, Owen love; I remember," murmured Amy, returning some of the caresses that he was lavishing upon her.

The next morning, true to his promise, the magistrate sent over the constable, who questioned everybody minutely and made a thorough examination of the premises. But

his search elicited nothing new. And he went back as he came.

That night, when Amy and her son were sitting alone together, after the two little sisters were asleep, and Nancy had returned to the kitchen, Amy broke a long and thoughtful silence by saying:

"Owen, love, the magistrate and the minister man may say what they please; but I will never believe that your dear father fell a victim to the fugitive negroes, never. Something whispers me that his death was in some way connected with the secret of that strange child's birth!"

"Oh, mother, mother," exclaimed Owen, with a cry of pain—"don't say so; don't think that my Lily May is in any way mixed up with such a black crime! Poor Lily May! Isn't it cruel enough that she was cast away a helpless baby, without being suspected of such a stain as that!"

"Owen, you mistake me, love. I am not casting any reproach upon the child!"

"Oh, but mother, it looks like it."

"Very well, then, dear, we will leave Lily May's name out of the question. But now, Owen, I want you to take pen and ink, and make a memorandum of certain facts about that first visit your father paid to that unknown house."

Owen quickly procured writing materials and sat himself down.

"Write first—Notes of Events Connected with the Mysterious Death of Doctor Hugh Wynne."

"It is written, mother."

Amy then proceeded to give him, for the first time, all the details as far as they were known, of the events of that stormy evening when the doctor was called out at midnight to visit a nameless patient.

Owen wrote after her dictation, making no comment until she came to describe the house

"A large, square house, standing amid shrubbery, in a clearing of the forest."

Then Owen dropped his pen and looked at her, and their eyes met.

"Mother!"

"Owen!"

"That is like this house! *This* is a large, square house, standing amid shrubbery, in a clearing of the forest! And here we found the relics!"

"Yes, my dear, but the house of which I speak was a very handsome house, very superbly furnished. And it was more than twice as far from the village as this is, and in quite another direction."

"Oh! I am glad of that! I am very glad of that!"

Amy passed on to other items. When she came to describe the elder lady of the house, Owen dropped his pen once more as he repeated:

"Tall, with black hair, black eyebrows, green eyes, sharp nose, thin lips, and a protruding chin! Mother! the very woman that came and tried to get Lily May from me! Except that the woman I mean had gray hair, or it might have been a gray wig. I remember what you said at the time! that the woman was no common countrywoman, but a lady of rank, who sought the life of Lily May, as Herod sought the lives of the innocents!"

"Yes, dear, I remember saying that! I remember also promising I would tell you some day all that your father told me of this affair! Well, the day is come! And I am telling you, Owen! And I want you to commit what I say carefully to paper," said Amy. And then she passed on to describe the young mother—a soft, round, little beauty, with regular and delicate features, and with this singular contrast in her complexion—skin as fair as a lily, and hair and eyes as black as sloes.

This time Owen absolutely threw down his pen with violence, exclaiming:

"Mother! mother! the very lady who called at our shop and made so much of Lily May!"

"Was that her description?"

"Exactly!"

"I should not wonder if she were the mother! And yet if she was, why did she not claim her child? She said—that is, the mother of the babe said—she was married—and if your customer was the same lady, Owen, why should she not have claimed her child? Owen, did she look like a woman that could desert a child?"

"Oh no, no, mother dear; she looked as good and true as any thing."

"Their name was Powers! I must think what to do in the matter! But in the meantime, Owen, take down the rest of the notes."

Owen took them down at his mother's dictation.

When the notes were quite finished, Amy said:

"To-morrow, Owen dear, I wish you to make three copies of these notes: one to be left with Mr. Morley, one to be left with Mrs. Potts, and the other to be retained by yourself."

"I will be sure to do it, mother," said Owen.

And they embraced each other and went to bed.

CHAPTER XXV.

RISING.

He had a heart unstained,
Which bravely struggled still,
And unsubdued maintained
A ceaseless war with ill.

A steadfast heart in him,
And not a winged thing
That flits from limb to limb,
And can but sing in spring.—*D'Huxatime.*

All that Amy planned was accomplished.

Copies of her memorandums were placed in the hands of

Mr. Morley and of Mrs. Potts, so as to insure the preservation of at least one copy in case the other should be lost.

And a carefully-worded advertisement was written, and duplicates were sent to several of the most widely-circulated papers in the country. The advertisement ran thus:

IF MR. AND MRS. POWERS, WHO SPENT A DAY AT the Elm Tree Inn, at Rogues' Harbor, on the first of February last, will address a letter to the initials A. W., Post Office, Rogues' Harbor, Maryland, they will receive a piece of information that may greatly concern them.

But days and weeks passed and no answer was received to this notice.

When the weeks had passed into months, Owen's heart, which had been held in a grip of suspense, was relieved and he breathed freely.

"Mother dear, nobody means to come after my Little May," he said one night, when they were sitting together by the light of the candle, Amy with a rainbow cloud of lace and ribbon before her, engaged in making caps for sale; and Owen, with some bleached mutton bones in his hand, carving out egg spoons for the same destination.

"Owen, I do believe that you are glad!" said Amy.

"Oh, mother dear, I cannot help it. I *am* glad that Lily May is not to be taken from us! Oh, mother, if you only knew how much I feared that she would be claimed and carried off! how I used to tremble when I would kiss her good-bye in the morning for fear I should never see her again. And how my heart would ache all day long while I was out peddling! And how often in the day I would put up prayers to the Lord that my Lily May might never, never be taken away from me. And how my very breath would stop as I got near home at night for fear that I should not find her here, and that somebody would tell me that she was gone. Oh, mother dear! if you knew all this, you

would be glad she is not taken away from me!" said the boy, with his voice and his face, too, trembling with emotion.

"I *do* know it, Owen. I knew it all the time. Don't you think I notice you, my boy? And I am glad, for your sake, that the child is likely to be left on our hands. But it is perfectly wonderful to me, Owen, how you dote on that child."

"I cannot help it, dear mother. Some of us boys love one thing and some another. I love Lily May. There's Bill Spicer has got a mocking-bird. And Sam Durkee has got a white rabbit. And I have got Lily May, which is so much greater, you know. And she loves me, too, mother dear, with all her little heart. And she climbs up to the window and watches for me every night. Her little face against the window-pane is the first thing I see when I get near home. Oh, mother dear, if I had come home any night and missed the little face! I——"

And here his voice became choked with emotion. And he got up and went to the sofa, where Lily May was sleeping—for the children were so well grown now that the cradle would hold but one, and that one was Gay—and he knelt down beside Lily May and kissed her softly in her sleep.

And she half awoke; became half conscious of who was bending over her; put her little arms up around his neck; murmured some inarticulate sounds of endearment, and sank to sleep again.

"You know I fed her, mother"—said Owen, apologetically—"I fed her the day after she was brought to us, when she wasn't but a day old. And I fed her all the time you were so ill. So how can I help loving her? Why, anybody would love even a mouse that they had fed and taken care of, much more a little child like Lily May."

And with that he softly arose and returned to his work.

Nancy had entered quietly during the latter part of this

conversation, and now stood, with eyes of strange interest, regarding the boy.

The next day, when Owen had started on his daily round, Nancy, while piling up the cups and saucers to put them into the cupboard, said to her mistress:

"Miss Amy, I hope that there same said divertisement will never be answered."

"I really and truly do hope so, too, Nancy," said her mistress.

"Because you see, Miss Amy, I done cotch my eye on Marse Owen. He ralely and truly done fretted hisself thin ever since that onlucky divertisement has been in the paper."

"I know it, Nancy. And if it should not be answered, as I pray it may not be, I never will put in another."

"'Cause you see, Miss Amy, though I don't believe in broken hearts as a general thing, I *do* believe as how, if anybody was to take that child away, that boy would almost break his heart."

"It would go very hard with him, I know. And after what I have seen I will never again try to get rid of Lily May. All my anxiety now is lest the advertisement should be seen and answered, after all."

"And mine, too. Bother the old divertisement! It wasn't worth giving our boy so much trouble," said Nancy, as she almost flung the plates into the cupboard, to the serious risk of fracture.

Nor was Owen himself quite free from anxiety. He was subject to severe relapses of that mental pain. He remembered that people sometimes glanced over old papers, or talked of their contents. And he reflected that Mr. and Mrs. A. Powers might yet chance to see the advertisement, and come and claim the child—his own Lily May. And so every morning, on leaving her, he would take a long, lingering, affectionate leave of her, with the thought that it might be his last.

And all through the day, whenever that thought recurred, he would send up short, fervent prayers to the Lord that his Lily May might be left to him. One day in the midst of this prayer the thought occurred to him that he had never yet especially returned thanks to the Lord on account of Lily May. And after that, whenever he prayed for her, he first thanked the Lord for the gift of Lily May, and then implored Him to preserve her to him.

And every evening, on returning home, he would be keenly watchful, and long before he got near enough to see, he would strain his eyes in the effort to discover whether the little face was at the open window.

The faithful little face was always there.

And Owen, with a sigh of relief, always thanked God that it was.

Yes, the faithful little face was always there; for Lily May had grown to know the hour of Owen's return. And in the gathering summer twilight, when the big drawing-room grew dusky, she would climb to the open window, where the last yellow rays of the sunset were lingering, and look out until she saw him coming Then she would climb or tumble down to the floor, and toddle to the door, panting and gasping with impatience, until somebody came and opened the door for "Owey." "Owey" was the first word she ever learned, and the only one she could yet speak.

But Owen's great anxiety for the safety of his Lily May did not cause him to neglect his business. He still drove a thriving trade. He gradually enlarged the circle of his tours. And everywhere he was looked for with impatience and welcomed with pleasure.

In August Amy received the two hundred dollars owed her by Dr. Meadows. And she immediately sent Owen to Mr. Spicer with the amount of his bill.

The good-hearted grocer received the money with a sigh, murmuring:

"I had hoped it would have been different, Owen, my boy. I had hoped it would have been quite different."

"Mother is very grateful to you, sir. And she will not cease to be so now she has settled with you. Good-morning," said Owen. And he made his bow, and hurried away, for he had no time to lose.

When he got home he told his mother all that had passed between Mr. Spicer and himself.

"He hoped it would have been different, Owen? Why, did he hope that I would always continue his debtor to the amount of his bill?" said Amy, in surprise; for in her complete absorption in the memory of her lost husband, this young widow had never imagined the nature of those dreams that had disturbed the honest grocer's prosaic life.

"I suppose that was it, mother dear; for I do believe that he likes to do you favors," replied the boy.

"And here he has done me a favor in spite of myself," said Amy, who was looking at the receipt, and counting her money. "He has charged me only fifty dollars for all the things that I got from him, and for things we got before your dear father died, which was much more. The true bill must have been twice as much as this," she added.

"Mother dear, you can't help it. To be sure you might go and ask him for the items of your bill, but I don't believe he could give them to you; for I don't believe he ever charged them against you, or that he ever meant for you to pay for them; but I am glad that you have paid something anyhow."

"Here, Owen! I have a hundred and fifty dollars left. Take the money, dear, and put it with what you have saved up. And when you send for the fall goods, invest this also. You see I am not afraid to trust you now, Owen. Six months experience has convinced me that you are fit for the trade you have undertaken." And she put the money in his hands.

"Thank you, mother dear! It is all for you and the two little sisters. And now, altogether, I shall have four hundred dollars. And, mother, I tell you what I think I ought to do when I buy my fall stock."

"What, Owen?"

"Why, I think I ought to invest part of the money in staple dry goods—cotton, calico, flannel and the like."

"But they will be too heavy for you to carry, my child."

"Yes, I know, mother dear. And so I think, also, that I had better set up the little wagon and pony now."

"Wagon and pony, Owen! That will be expensive."

"But it will pay, mother dear! It will pay so well in the extended trade," said the boy, with a pleading look.

Amy remembered her promise to Mr. Lacy that she would not hinder her son, that she would trust in him and give him a chance to prove what he could do. So she said, in a more indulgent tone:

"Tell me how you propose to get your wagon and pony, dear."

"Well, you know, mother, there's Mr. Larcom, the wheelwright, whose name is on our books to the amount of thirty dollars. And he is a very hard man to screw money out of. But I do really think I could get him to build me a tight little wagon for that money. Nothing very handsome, you know, mother. Just a strong box on wheels, with a driver's seat and a tarpaulin cover for wet weather. And I do really think, mother, that he would be glad to do it and get rid of me and the debt, for I dun him unmercifully, mother dear, because he is able to pay."

"Well, and the pony, Owen! How do you propose to get the pony?"

"Well, mother, Ben Miley, Mr. Allen's overseer, has a strong, steady, brown cob, that I have been looking at. And he will let me have him for fifty dollars. And I think he is worth the money. And there is my turn-out."

"But Owen! How could I trust you to drive a horse? How can you trust yourself?"

"Oh, mother! I could drive a horse as much as two years ago. When my dear father used to take me out with him in the gig, to hold the horse, while he went in to see his patients, he taught me to drive."

"Owen, you take my breath away from me, sometimes. But I will not hinder you, my dear. You may buy your little wagon and pony."

On the first of September, Owen sent three hundred and fifty dollars by Mr. Lacy to New York, to purchase his new and enlarged stock of goods.

And while waiting for them he made his wishes known to Mr. Larcom, the wheelwright, concerning his new wagon.

And Mr. Larcom, as Owen had predicted, was very glad to do the job and get clear of his debt in that way. And to do the man justice, he did the job well. For in fact he rather liked Owen; and the only reason why he had not paid him before was because he liked money better.

Owen's goods arrived late in September. His wagon was already finished and his horse was purchased.

It was on a splendid day early in October that Owen took what might be called his second step up the ladder of fortune. For on this day his neat wagon, painted a dark bright blue, and filled with boxes of merchandise, and drawn by a shiny-coated, smart brown cob, stood before the door, waiting for its master. And Owen came out, great-coated and gloved, with his cap on his head and his whip under his arm, followed by Amy, Nancy, and the two little sisters. He kissed them all around, and then climbed into his seat, took the reins in his hands and unwound his whip.

And it was a sight to see him touch his hat and smile, and drive off, followed by the affectionate glances of Amy and Nancy, and by the shouts of the two little sisters, who were positively dancing with delight.

CHAPTER XXVI.

UPWARD.

Boy! let the eagle's course ever be thine,
Upward and onward and true to the line!—*Hemans.*

The faithful little face watched long that evening for the return of Owen in his wagon.

This is no fancy picture; it is not drawn from imagination, but from memory—this picture of the little baby-girl watching daily at the sunset window for the return of one she loved best on earth, and in her infantile dawn of intelligence associating the coming of that one with the only sunlight that ever shone into that dreary old drawing-room—the last sunlight of departing day!

Yes! the faithful little face watched long that evening.

Owen was unusually late.

Nancy had the kettle boiled and the table set, the tea made and the muffins toasted; and she was waiting impatiently for the return of "Master," as she had derisively called Owen ever since he had asserted himself to be the little master of the house, under his mother.

Amy was uneasy. Her busy imagination awoke the spirits of regret and fear; and these disturbed her mind.

It was very wrong to permit so young a boy to attempt to drive a pony over rough country roads, whispered regret.

Suppose the horse has run away with the wagon! suggested fear.

Still Amy did not sufficiently believe in either of these disturbers of her peace to be seriously anxious; she was only slightly uneasy.

She would not call Lily May off the window-seat. She preferred her to remain there. For she knew that Lily

May's bright eyes would be the first to discern Owen's approach, and her eager voice the first to announce his arrival.

The sequel proved that Amy was right.

It had grown dark. And Nancy had brought in the candles—they could afford two candles now—and placed them on the tea-table, when Lily May, like "the man on the look-out" at sea, gave a great cry, and scrambled down off the window-seat and toddled into the hall, panting:

"Owey! Owey! Owey!"

And she stood gasping, dancing, and pulling at the door, until Nancy ran and opened it, and admitted the boy, who caught the impetuous child up in his arms, and covered her face with kisses as he bore her back into the room.

"You are late, Owen," said his mother, coming to meet him.

"Yes, mother dear, I am late; but I am *here*, which I would not be at all if it had not been for the fear of making you anxious," replied the boy, gravely.

"How, Owen? What do you mean?"

"Why, mother dear, I should not have come back to-night if it had not been from the fear that you would think something dreadful had happened to me: that the runaway negroes had set upon me, or the runaway horse had broken the wagon or my neck."

"Not come back to-night, Owen! Why, what should keep you away?"

"I will tell you, mother. You know, naturally, with my wagon and pony, I made a much larger circuit than ever before. And at four o'clock this afternoon I found myself ten miles from home and in a thriving neighborhood, where, however, I understood that there was neither shop nor pedler. I stopped at a farm-house, where the women bought a good deal from me, and where the men pressed me to stay all night. And I knew that if I should stay, I

should be able to start bright and early in the morning, and sell out nearly, if not quite *all* my stock before my return home. And to tell you the truth, mother, I was very much tempted to stay. But I considered how anxious *you* would be, and so I came home. But now, mother dear, I wish to warn you once for all, so that you need never be uneasy about me. Sometimes, when I am far from home, it will be best for me to stay at some farmhouse all night, so as not to lose time coming and going over the same ground the same day, where of course I couldn't sell any thing more, but so as to go farther bright and early the next day. You understand, mother?"

"Yes, Owen."

"And so when I stay out you won't be anxious about me?"

"Oh, Owen, how can I help it, dear?"

"By trusting, mother. I *think* I can take care of myself. But whether I can or not, the Lord can surely take care of me. And so, dear mother, if you can't trust in me, you can trust in the Lord."

"Yes, I can, Owen, and I will, dear," said Amy, kissing him.

"Don't put my tea on the table quite yet; I have got to go out and give Fort a feed first."

"Fortunatus" was the fancy name that Owen had bestowed upon his pony. But as Fortunatus was found to be too long for ordinary use, it was soon abbreviated to Fort.

"*Your* tea!" exclaimed Nancy. "It ain't only *your* tea, but everybody's tea that is a-waiting! So you be quick!"

"Oh, mother, I am sorry you waited for me. Nancy, I will be as quick as ever I can," said Owen, hurrying out to attend to his pony.

So quick he was that by the time Nancy had set the tea on the table he had returned.

'You see, mother dear, I want Fort to eat *his* supper

while I take my tea; because as soon as we both have done we have got to go to town."

"To town, Owen?"

"Yes, mother. This is the way of it: At that last farm-house where we stopped last, and where the people wanted me to stay all night, they were out of sugar. And they wanted to know if I had any to sell. Well, I hadn't, you know. But you better believe I mean to have for the future. So to-night I must go into town to Mr. Spicer's. You know he sells wholesale as well as retail—and I mean to get fifty pounds or so, and also some coffee and tea, just to accommodate my customers. And the next time I send to New York I will get a quantity of family groceries at first cost, and take them round with my other wares. I tell you, mother dear, it will increase my business wonderfully."

"Owen, my breath is gone. I feel like a hen who sees the duckling she has hatched go upon the water—an element foreign to her habits."

Owen laughed, and jumped up and kissed her. He had expected more opposition to his plans than she had offered. And he was glad to get her consent so easily.

It was a fine, clear, starlight night, and Owen got up very cheerfully to prepare for his drive.

"And you just off your journey, too, dear! when you must be so tired," said his mother.

"Oh, that's nothing! If I am going to make a fortune for you and the two little sisters, I mustn't mind being tired," said Owen.

"But you are going out of your way to do this, Owen."

"I mustn't mind going out of my way to accommodate customers either, mother."

All this time Lily May hung uneasily about Owen. Now she took hold of his clothes and looked up into his face, and put up her little mouth as if she would have asked a

question if she could have formed the words. And she tried several times; and at last articulated:

"Doin' away adain?"

And then she was so delighted with her success, and with the surprise it created, that she forgot her distress at the idea of Owen's departure, and she let go his clothes and clapped her hands and laughed.

"Yes, I am going away for a little while; only a little while; and then I will come back. I will come back very soon, dear Lily May," said Owen, trying hard to impress the meaning of his words upon her. But she understood him very well; and showed that she did so by clapping her hands again and laughing, and putting up her mouth to him for a parting kiss, which he immediately gave her.

Then Owen started on his night ride.

And Nancy cleared away the tea-service, and Amy put the children to bed, and then seated herself at the table, with a drift of net-lace and ribbon before her, and went to work upon the pretty fancy wares that she took so much pleasure in making up.

Amy worked on for two or three hours, until she heard the wheels of Owen's wagon draw up before the door. Then she laid aside her work to greet him. He came in, looking as fresh and cheerful as if he had not been hard at work the whole day.

"Oh, mother dear, Mr. Spicer was as good as he always is. He told me that he regularly supplies the smaller country shops in this neighborhood, at a very small advance upon the first cost, so as to enable them to make a fair profit. He said he would let *me* have the things *at* first cost. But I wouldn't take them on such terms, mother. I thanked him, and told him that I would prefer paying him the advance that others did."

"You were quite right, Owen."

"*He* thought so, mother! I saw that he did. And as for me, mother, I hope it is not pride that makes me feel

so, but I *do* feel as if I would rather do every thing myself, than always to be looking to others to give me help."

"Right again, my boy."

"And yet I *do* love Mr. Spicer, dearly, mother! Well, now I must go out and put Fort up. I will draw the wagon up under the shed, and leave the groceries in it, so as to be ready to start early in the morning," said the boy. And he left the room for that purpose.

But the last thing Owen did that night, after he had kissed his mother good-night, and after he had said his prayers, was to creep to Lily May's crib, and kiss her, in her sleep. Gay was with her mother. She—Lily May—was alone.

The cloud of anxiety that had so long overshadowed Owen's mind on account of Lily May had gradually passed away. He no longer dreaded that she would be taken from him. But the effect of that cloud remained in the deeper love he cherished for the little one.

Owen prospered. Not continuously and uninterruptedly, for such is not the course of human affairs; but he prospered as those do who bring intelligence, self-reliance, and steadiness of aim to bear upon their purpose. He had great obstacles to contend against. They had met him at the very onset of his career, and they met him at almost every step of his progress. But such minds as his not only conquer obstacles, but actually convert them into means of greater success. You know that this was really Owen's case. For his specialty was trading. Now, there could not have possibly been a worse starting-point for a tradesman than the remote country house that was his widowed mother's home, and to which he was therefore bound fast. But you know that he was not upon that account discouraged or turned from his purpose, as a weaker nature might have been. As he could not keep a shop in the old country house, he had made up a pack, and afterwards set up his wagon and pony. People would not

come to *him* to buy; but he could take his wares to *them* —into their houses, under their eyes And in this way he sold much more even than he could have sold if he had kept the same goods in a shop in the village—where of course there were other shops; and he would have had other competitors. And this was the manner in which Owen Wynne conquered the first great obstacles that opposed him, and converted them into means of greater success.

CHAPTER XXVII.

PLEASANT DAYS.

The true nobility of generous minds,
Equal to either conquest, weal or woe,
Triumphant over fortune, friend or foe,
In thee, pure-hearted boy, its pattern finds.—*M. F. Tupper.*

On the Saturday of that week Owen came home in the middle of the afternoon, which circumstance surprised the family as something very unusual, and astonished Lily May as a phenomenon quite out of the course of nature; so that she could but hold on to Amy's skirts and gaze at the prodigy until Owen, full of laughter, caught her up in his arms and kissed her heartily.

He was in the highest spirits. He had sold out his whole load, and had come home with full pockets.

After explaining all this to his mother, he went out to rub down and feed his pony, and wash and put away his wagon.

And then he went to his room and made himself tidy.

Lastly, he came back to his mother, fresh, smiling, and affectionate, and stood rubbing his hands before the warm fire and watching Nancy lay the table-cloth.

"When did ever I have a half holiday before, mother

dear? It was all owing to the pony and the good roads that I got over so much ground and sold out so early. I am glad it is Saturday, too, I shall enjoy it so much more."

"I hope you will enjoy many more half-holidays on Saturdays, my dear."

"I think it is likely I shall, mother. People buy faster on Saturdays. Nancy, what have you got for tea?"

"Muffins and a omelette and grilled bacon," replied the cook, flourishing out the table-cloth.

"All right, Nancy. Nothing in this world better to eat. Let there be plenty of it, Nancy dear. I am so hungry that I feel hollow all the way down to the soles of my boots!"

"Hollow all the way down to the soles of your boots! Tell me that as if *that* was any news to *me!* When has you been any other way ever since I have cooked for you? Never you fear! I'll fill you up! The goodness knows it I've done it often enough!"

"Just so, Nancy; but don't smash the crockery ware about it!" said Owen, in laughing comment upon the energetic manner in which Nancy slapped down the tea-tray.

These little spars between the boy and the cook occurred every evening; but they were in perfect good-humor; and indeed they were got up more for the amusement of Amy than for any particular pleasure Owen and Nancy felt in teasing each other.

While they were seated at the tea-table, Owen said:

"Mother dear, I have curried the pony until his coat shines like satin; and I have washed the wagon as clean as a new penny. Now what do you think of letting me drive you to church to-morrow in the wagon?"

"Oh, Owen, I hadn't thought of it at all! But now you mention it, I think it will be delightful!" said Amy, with almost childlike eagerness.

"I knew you would think so, mother dear. And what's to hinder my doing it? Indeed, mother, I am even gladder

to have the wagon for the sake of driving you to church Sundays than I am to have it for the purpose of peddling—I am, indeed! For though the peddling is pleasant business, taking you to church is real heart's delight!" said Owen, dropping his knife and fork to rub his hands.

"And to me too, dear. I have not been to church so long. I shall enjoy it so much. But the pony, Owen dear," said Amy, with sudden gravity—"will the pony enjoy it equally well? Ought not he to rest Sunday, after being to work all the week?"

"Yes, mother—to rest from *peddling;* but not from going to church. And that is another reason why I was glad to sell out so early to-day, so that he could have a good long rest in the stable before going out to-morrow. And bless you, mother, that will be a light task enough taking you to church. You are not so heavy, dear knows, little mother. And lor! Fort will enjoy it as much as we do. Why, it will be a holiday for him! Don't you think, now, if he had his choice, he wouldn't rather go to church, and stand in the church-yard among his acquaintances for two hours to-morrow, than to stay all day long shut up in the dark stable?"

"Yes; I dare say he would, dear. And it is all right; we will go."

Thus this mother and son always thought of the good of other creatures, even of the humblest brute that depended upon them, before they thought of their own pleasure. Conscientiousness and benevolence were ruling principles in their minds. And this was very beautiful. But to the hard, practical common sense of Nancy it was extremely offensive; and she often spoke her mind, as she did now:

"*He* enjoy it! The *hoss* enjoy it! Who care whether he enjoy it or not, so you do! Hush, honey! I done hear a good deal o' nonsense in my time 'bout the rights o' men and the rights o' wimmen, and now I spects I've got to hear 'bout the rights o' hosses!"

"Well, Nancy, why not? Horses have rights, sacred rights, which—which—mother, dear, tell her! I can peddle better than I can preach!" said Owen, laughing and resuming his tea-cup.

"Yes, Nancy, my son speaks truly. Horses and all dumb creatures have rights—rights to good treatment at our hands. God has given them to us, has made them useful to us and dependent on us; and he will hold us responsible for our usage of them. And their rights, Nancy, appeal to us all the more strongly and tenderly because they cannot expostulate with us," said Amy, gravely.

"Can't postulate! can't they!" exclaimed Nancy, seizing upon this word with avidity, and misunderstanding it with fatuity. "Now, Miss Amy, tell that there to the hoss-marines! No, not to the *hoss*-marines; *they* know better! tell it to the *foot*-marines; but don't tell it to me! Hosses can't postulate! Why, Miss Amy, haven't I seen them postulate on their hind legs, with their fore legs up in the air in most wickedest postures as ever dumb brutes could get into. Can't *postulate!*" said Nancy, with infinite irony.

"Oh, dear, dear, Nancy, I said *ex*postulate!" exclaimed Amy.

"Well! and if that don't mean the same thing, I should like to know what it does mean!"

"It means—it means—" said Amy.

"It means that they can't 'cuss at you,' Nancy, dear," said Owen, laughing.

"Well then, why couldn't Miss Amy call cussin, cussin, and not *ask*-postulating? In course they can't cuss at you. And a good thing too! but they can *kick* at you, and they does it too! both hosses and cows! 'Twas only last week as Crumpie kicked over the pail of milk and switched her tail into my face, and tossed her head and scampered off because her madamship's mash was too hot for her mouth!"

"Well, that was all fair! You wronged her by scalding

her mouth. And she resented it by kicking over the pail. She only asserted her rights!"

"Well, lord! I've heered of the rights o' men and the rights o' wimmen, and now I've heered of the rights o' brutes! And next I shouldn't wonder to hear of the rights o' wegetables."

"Certainly, Nancy! Vegetables have rights," laughed Owen.

"Wegetables have——" gasped the woman, losing her breath.

"Yes! the rights of vegetables are to be well cultivated! And if they do not get their rights they dwindle, wither and die; or else they grow up stunted, bitter or tasteless."

"Wegetables have their——! Well! next you'll tell me wittels has their rights to be eat or not to be eat as they pleases."

"Certainly, victuals have their rights! And the rights of victuals are to be well cooked! And if they do not get their rights, they take their spite out on our stomachs."

"Wittels has rights! Well I ain't astonished at any thing any more! And I shall 'spect to hear you and Miss Amy argufying the topic whether you'll eat any more wittels or not, for fear the wittels don't enjoy being eat, as much as you do eating of 'em."

"All right, Nancy! And if we can't agree, we'll call you in to decide the question!" said Owen, as they all arose from the table.

Nancy grunted her doubts and her disapprobation of the whole subject, as she cleared away the tea-service and made tidy the room.

As soon as the shutters were closed and the candles were lighted, Amy went into her chamber and brought out her bonnet, mantle and gloves. And then she took her work-basket, with its drift of laces, nets and ribbons, and she went to work, renovating her apparel for the morning.

She put a new cap and new strings to the bonnet. And made a neat new collar, and basted it to the neck of her mantle. And then she mended her gloves, and basted neat new cuffs to them.

Amy was as pleased as a child, with the idea of going to church in the morning. She was pleased with the whole programme—the neat, blue wagon; the spruce brown pony; her son for the driver; the fine drive through the woods to church; the arrival there and the meeting of friends; and the church services and the sermon; and the drive through the woods home, with a good appetite for dinner. All these delights Amy enjoyed over and over again in anticipation. And then she reflected, in a sort of ecstasy, it would not be *this* Sunday only, but *every* Sunday, she would enjoy this great pleasure. And then she asked herself to whom, under Divine Providence, would she owe these enjoyments? And the answer was—To Owen! To her young son! And that evening, when she finally bade him good-night, she added, with more fervency than usual:

"God bless you, Owen! God bless you, my dear, dear child!"

Few realities in this world of disappointments come up to expectations. But the reality of Amy's enjoyment the next day fully answered her anticipations.

To begin with, the day itself was a glorious one—clear, bright, frosty and exhilarating! And the pony was fresh and the wagon was smart. And Owen was in the highest spirits, and Amy in her best looks. And above all, Nancy was in the most gracious humor, and readily promised, not only to take the best possible care of the two children during the mother's absence, but also to have the roast fowls done to a turn by the time she should get home.

Gleeful as a girl, Amy took her seat in the wagon. And proud as any queen-mother, she saw her little son gather the reins in his hands and start the horse.

The two little sisters, standing on the bench of the porch

and watched over by Nancy, clapped their hands and laughed in admiration and sympathy.

And that caused Owen to stop the horse and turn and call out to them:

"Never mind, dear Lily May and Lily Gay. Owey will give *you* a ride to-morrow afternoon. Owey will not be always thinking only about business and money-making."

They seemed to understand that something pleasant was promised to them; for they clapped their hands and laughed more than ever. And Lily May called after him:

"I love *oo*, Owey! I love *oo!* I love *oo!*"

And so she continued to call as long as she could see him, or he could hear her.

He drove gayly on.

The drive through the pine woods; the arrival at the church; the cheerful greeting of friends—all were as delightful as Amy had expected. And the church services and the preacher's sermon were as strengthening and as comforting as she had hoped they would be.

And, finally, Amy returned home looking fresher and happier than she had looked for years.

Nor was this the last of her innocent enjoyments. Every Saturday at noon Owen returned home, in order to make ready for the Sabbath. And every Sunday morning he drove his mother to church.

And Amy might now be truly called happy and prosperous.

She had known the anguish of one awful bereavement; but time and faith had softened the sharpness of her sorrow. She cherished the memory of her husband with religious devotion; but she no longer mourned hopelessly over his departure. She thought of him now as alive, safe and happy in that better land; and waiting for her on that other shore.

She had known the bitterness of extreme poverty; but that also had passed away from her life forever.

Ah, poverty! Let the philosophers say what they will to the contrary, it is a great evil—one of the very greatest evils in this world! It is not only—in its extreme cases—cold, hunger and nakedness, resulting in freezing, famine and death; but it is even in its modified forms—fetters, slavery and imprisonment—binding the hands of its victims from doing something that they ought to do; crushing them down into some position that they ought not to fill; and keeping them in some place where they should not remain. It is an evil to be guarded against, worked against and struggled against with every lawful weapon! to be conquered and got rid of at every cost of pains and labor!

Amy had experienced this great evil in all its bitterness, but now she was rid of it forever. Not by her own feeble efforts; but by the blessing of Providence on the enterprise of her young son! And when sometimes this truth would suddenly burst with all its force upon the mind of Amy, she could scarcely believe the testimony of her own reason! That she should owe all her present peace, comfort, and prosperity to her little Owen! It seemed utterly incredible! And yet it was all very natural. You who have traced Owen Wynne's career so far know that there was no such thing as chance or luck in his prosperity. Intelligent, well-directed, and persevering labor was the only secret of his success.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A BRIGHT DESCENT.

'Twas like the hue that autumn gives
To yonder changed and dying leaves,
Breathed over by his frosty breath;
Scarce can the gazer feel that this
Is but the spoiler's treacherous kiss,
The mocking smile of death.—*Whittier.*

Improved conditions certainly prolonged the life of Amy Wynne; though they could not finally save it. Probably nothing could have saved it; for we know that even the wealthy and the royal, who are surrounded by every earthly luxury and attended by the best medical skill, still die of the same insidious disease that was undermining the life of this poor widow.

For two years Amy enjoyed much peace and comfort at Forest Lodge; her life was brightened by the great blessing she possessed in her son; and not a cloud arose to dim the clearness of her happiness.

But then at the commencement of the third spring Amy began to droop again. Not that at first there seemed to be much the matter with her. Her cough was no worse than it had often been before; but she lost flesh and strength; became thinner and weaker; and went to bed earlier in the evening and got up later in the morning. And her failure was without any assignable cause; for she had suffered no recent want, or privation, or exposure. She had really taken great care of herself, for her children's sake; she was so anxious, poor woman, to live until they should be grown up and able to do without her. And she tried so hard to live! And even now, when, to use her own expression, she felt as if she was "caving in," she would not admit that she was the least indisposed.

"It is the spring languor, Owen, love," she said—"just the spring languor. Everybody feels it. I am not the only one. I shall be better in the summer."

And she smilingly applied herself to the manufacture of those beautiful caps and collars, the construction of which was at once her most agreeable pastime and her most profitable occupation.

And her son was re-assured by her words, which seemed confirmed by the event of her improvement for a day or two. Deceitful improvement!

Summer came; but Amy grew no better. She grew worse in fact; for now she not only went to bed earlier and got up later, but she had to lie down several hours during the middle of the day. Still she would not confess to illness.

"It is the heat of this summer, Nancy, you old goose!" she said; "nothing but the excessive heat of this summer. There was never such a hot summer, I do believe. Everybody is complaining of it. I am sure I am not the only one. I shall be stronger in the autumn."

And in the cool of the morning and of the evening, Amy amused herself by inventing the most charming styles of collars and sleeves for Owen's sales.

And Nancy hoped her mistress's words might be true, especially when again they seemed borne out by another temporary improvement in Amy's health—another deceitful one, of course.

Autumn came, but brought no amendment to Amy; on the contrary, it brought her an accession of cough, with the addition of pain and fever. And all day long she was obliged to recline upon the large sofa drawn up before the parlor fire. And still she would not harbor the thought of disease.

"Nonsense, Owen, darling! It is the autumnal change of weather that has given me cold," she said; "nothing but the autumnal change of weather, which has given almost

everybody colds. Some people even have pleurisy. I think *I* have got off *very* easily with only this cold! And when the weather is settled in the winter I shall be quite well. Now bring me my work-basket, Owen, and set it on the low chair, here by the side of my sofa, where I can reach it handily. I have just thought of such a pretty, simple style of trimming breakfast-caps, which will be sure to please the ladies. And I think I shall feel better if I work a little."

Owen obeyed her. And Amy lay reclining on the sofa, with her delicate fingers busy over her light work.

"Mother, darling, are you sure this work does not do you any harm?" he asked, kneeling beside her and watching her motions.

"I am sure it does me good, Owen. If I had not this pretty work to amuse me these dull November days, I do believe I should be sick in reality."

"And, mother dear, are you certain that you will be well in winter?"

"Certain, Owen—please the Lord!"

Owen believed her; believed, yet trembled.

And yet, again, the truth of Amy's prognostics seemed proved by what appeared to be a decided convalescence. Amy was so well that she was able to ride out in Owen's pony wagon. And on Christmas day she rode to church.

But that was the last time she was out. In January she was prostrated by what *she* called another bad cold. For two weeks she was very ill. And Dr. Meadows attended her. And even after she recovered from the acute stage of her illness, she was still so prostrated by weakness as to be confined to her bed. Yet—yet she refused to entertain the idea of her own serious ill health. She shut her eyes to the truth. She deceived herself and others.

"Nancy, you big old fool!" she said, half laughing and half crying—"It is only the severe cold of this winter that affects me so! Nothing but the excessively severe cold of

the winter! How can anybody expect to get well in such tremendous weather as this is. Why people in the village are many of them very ill, and some dying with pneumonia! I am sure I think myself very fortunate to escape with only a cold on the chest. I wish you wouldn't make a fuss over me as if I was ill. I am not ill. I am quite well enough to go in the drawing-room and lay on the sofa, as I used to do in the autumn, only that now the drawing-room being so large is so cold and so full of drafts that it wouldn't be prudent. And besides I seem to rest better here, which is a good thing until I get a little stronger, which I shall soon do. And I shall be quite right again in the spring."

And after this Amy insisted every morning on being propped up in bed, with many pillows behind her, and her work-basket before her. And thus she would sit for hours, with her dark hair loose, her fever-flushed cheeks bent over her work, and her delicate fingers busy among the laces and ribbons destined to adorn happier women.

The dying working for the living!

Often Owen came and found her thus employed. And though his heart was ready to break, he could say nothing to oppose her. For he saw that she was not only determined to work to the last, but that she was better satisfied in doing so.

Ah, reader, of this picture I may also truly say, that it is no fancy sketch! Some who read these lines will remember well that young mother, beautiful exceedingly even in decay, who sat propped up in bed, daily, for many months, cheerfully working to support her children, up to the very last week of her death.

It was with Amy a work of love; not of necessity. Owen's profits were now very large for him, and amply sufficient to supply his mother with every necessary comfort and even luxury.

So reluctant was Amy to be treated as an invalid that

she would not even permit old Nancy to sleep in the same room with her at night, as the good woman wished to do, so as to be at hand if the patient should require attention.

Such being the case, Nancy, as the best substitute for her presence, every evening arranged at the bedside of Amy a little stand with a pitcher of toast-water and a clean glass for drink to quench the feverish thirst of the sick woman.

After which, when everybody had gone to bed, Nancy would stealthily draw her own mattress to the outside of Amy's door, and stretch herself upon it to sleep, as she expressed it, "with one eye and one ear shut and t'others open, for fear that the poor child might wake and want any thing in the night." This sleeping-arrangement continued for several days unknown to Amy. But at length she discovered it, and took her old servant severely to task for this invasion of her privacy.

"Can't I even be allowed to sleep in peace without being watched and listened to and spied upon, as if I was a baby, or an idiot, or a prisoner? How can you ever expect any one to sleep under such circumstances?" she sharply demanded.

Poor old Nancy had nothing to answer for herself but this:

"Miss Amy, child, I won't do so never no more. (In such ways as you can find me out,") was her mental reservation.

From this time, Amy became exceedingly watchful, jealous, and suspicious of any solicitude displayed by anybody for her health. And so it happened that she soon detected Nancy in some other precautions for her safety.

"You will make me imagine myself in a consumption, and then that will kill me, you old donkey, you! No! I don't want flax-seed tea! There!—take it away!" she once exclaimed, bursting into a fit of nervous sobs and tears.

Nancy crept out of the room with a very dejected air, hanging her head, and dragging her feet slowly one after the other, and so came plump up against Owen, who was hurrying in from his last peddling trip.

"Why, what on earth is the matter, Nancy?" exclaimed the boy.

"Oh, Marse Owen, child, I has a hard road to travel!"

"Is mother worse?" he demanded, in alarm.

"No, indeed! She is just the same; only a little samer in some things. She won't let me do nothing for her good. Ah, Marse Owen, my heart's gone down into my heels with the blowings-up she gives me!" And, as if such were literally the fact, Nancy crept on, heavily dragging one foot after the other.

Owen followed her into the kitchen. He was very much troubled; but what could he do or say? He was too just and kind not to feel for the old, faithful servant, and he was too loyal and loving not to defend his poor, nervous mother.

"I am very sorry for you, Nancy. But you must not judge my mother; no, not in your private thoughts; for you are not able to judge her fairly: no one but a physician could. I have often heard my dear father say that if we who are well and strong could only know the nervous state of those who are sick and weak, we should never dare to blame or to be impatient with them," he mildly said.

"Impatient! *Me* impatient long 'o the sick? 'Specially long 'o Miss Amy! Why lor, Marse Owen, child, I *couldn't* be! I've got *one* quality common to the donkeys and jass-ackses, as she 'pares me to so often; and that's *patience;* 'specially with her. And so, if she would only let me nuss her right, she might go on and call me all the old donkeys and all the old jass-ackses as never was, till doomsday, she might!" exclaimed Nancy.

"She says she will be well when the spring opens, Nancy; and then, you know, she will be the very first to

thank you for your kindness to her now," said Owen, as he passed on to his mother's room.

He found his mother sitting up in her white bed, and cheerfully busy in making up a pretty pair of under-sleeves of fine lace and blue ribbon. On the pure white counterpane before her stood her work-basket. On the foot of the bed sat Lily Gay and Lily May, now nearly four years old. They had tiny thimbles on their mites of fingers, and needles in their hands, and were trying to sew miniature under-sleeves that Amy cut for them out of the waste scraps of her own work. They were pleased and quiet. And Amy, as she worked, was smiling upon them. On one side of the bed was a large window, lightly veiled with a white muslin curtain, giving a wide view of the wintry landscape. On the other side was a bright wood fire.

Owen thought as he came in that this was a pleasant scene.

Amy, who had got over her vexation, held out her arms to embrace him.

But Lily May was foremost, as always, to greet him. As soon as she saw him she slided swiftly down from the bed and ran to him, holding up her little toy-work, and crying eagerly:

"See! see! Owey! Lily May make seeves for your sales!"

Owen caught her up in his arms and brought her to the bed, and sat her down there while he embraced his mother.

"And what success to-day, darling?" she inquired.

"Good, always good, dear mother. I have now, you know, really more capital than I need for this business. I have almost capital enough now to begin business on my own account in some large city. And when you get well, dear mother, we will think about it, shall we not?"

"Yes, dear."

"Look! look, Owey! I make seeves for my doll!" said Lily Gay, holding up her work.

"See! see, Owey! see *me!* I make seeves for you sales, Owey!" said Lily May.

"And not for your doll, Lily May?" asked Owen, smiling and caressing her.

"Yes, for my doll, p'esently; but for you sales now."

"They have a very good idea of using their needles, Owen. In another year, or at least in eighteen months, when they will be five years old, they will be really useful in this way. Though I should be very cautious how I let them sew long at a time. I should not let them sit at needle-work more than an hour at once," said Amy, looking hopefully at the two little sisters.

Suddenly her countenance changed. She caught up a pocket-handkerchief and then a towel, and crowded both to her mouth, and, holding them there, gazed wildly at Owen.

"What is the matter, mother dear?" he hastily inquired, in a low, frightened voice.

"Nothing! Take the children away. Call—Nancy—to me. Don't—come back—yourself," came a husky, whispering, muffled voice from behind the towel.

Owen, in serious alarm, caught up the two little sisters, and hurried with them, wondering, into the kitchen, where Nancy was busy getting tea ready.

"Go to mother, Nancy. Something is the matter. Hush! don't frighten the children," said Owen, in a low, hasty voice.

Nancy sat the tea-pot on the hearth, and hurried into Amy's room; and found her still sitting there, crowding the towel to her face and staring wildly.

"For goodness' sake, Miss Amy! What's this, child?" she demanded, in affright.

"Hush! The wash-bowl, quick!" came the husky whisper from the muffled lips.

Nancy flew to bring the required article.

Then Amy took the towel and the handkerchief from her

mouth. The handkerchief was soaked with blood, that welled from her lungs. As she bent over the wash-bowl, the change of position probably accelerated the hemorrhage; for the blood welled up so fast that in a few seconds she turned deadly white and fainted.

Nancy laid her back on the pillow, gently wiped her lips, put the wash-bowl, with its sanguine contents, into a closet, to conceal it until she should have an opportunity of burying it; and then hurried into the kitchen, where Owen was waiting in the utmost anxiety.

"Oh, Nancy! what *is* the matter with mother?" he exclaimed, involuntarily clasping his hands.

"Hush! Nothing much. Only a little spitting of blood I have had it often myself, you know; and see how well I am for all that! No, it ain't nothing much! but it ought to be prevented from coming back. So you must just saddle your pony, and go as fast as you can ride, and fetch Dr. Meadows," answered the woman, putting a strong control upon herself lest she should betray the terror that she really felt.

"Can I see mother first? She told me not to come back. But I suppose she did not mean I should stay away all the evening. Can I look in before I go, do you think?"

"No!" said Nancy, laying hold of him as if to stop him. "It wouldn't be good for her. Besides, you have no time. You must fetch the doctor as soon as possible. No, now, there is no danger, Marse Owen! Don't you be scared! But just you hurry and fetch the doctor as soon as ever you can!"

In a great panic, Owen ran out into the stable, saddled his pony, and galloped as fast as he could to the village to bring Doctor Meadows.

Nancy returned to her patient and began to use all the mildest means she could think of to bring her to consciousness. The case was a very delicate one. And Nancy

dared not take the usual measures for bringing a fainting woman round, least she should provoke a return—and probably a fatal return—of the hemorrhage.

But the tide seemed to have completely ebbed.

And at length Amy opened her eyes and moved her lips as if to speak.

Nancy bent over her, and holding and smoothing her hand between her own, said, tenderly:

"There, my lamb; it is all over now and you are better. But you must lie very still for a while, to recover yourself. Don't try to move."

Amy looked wildly from her eyes and moved her lips. And Nancy bent down her ear. When Amy whispered:

"You didn't tell poor Owen? You didn't frighten him?"

"No, my precious; why should I? There was nothing to frighten him about. Only a little blood. Lor'! I have lost twice as much in my time and none the worse for it," lied Nancy.

"The children didn't see it? Oh! I hope the children didn't see it! It would have frightened them so."

"No, my precious, the children didn't. But you mustn't try to talk, you know."

"Where is Owen?" whispered his mother.

"Well, honey, I was out'n middling bacon, so I sent him to town to fetch me some," lied Nancy.

"I'm glad you did; so he needn't know. When he comes back, tell him I am asleep, or trying to go to sleep, and that I don't want to be disturbed; will you?"

"Yes, my precious; I'll do any thing in the world, if you will only be quiet."

"And keep the children away from me for a while. I know I am so white I would frighten them. Will you keep them away, Nancy?"

"Yes, my lamb, Nancy will. This old jassacks will do

every thing right if you will only trust in her and be quiet."

"Oh, Nancy, dear, I didn't mean it; only I didn't want Owen to know yet a while," said Amy, pleadingly.

"There, there, my precious, I know it. This old jassacks knows it all!"

Amy smiled. She knew there was nothing malicious in old Nancy's recurrence to that epithet. And then she took the old woman's advice and she lay perfectly still while Nancy cleared the millinery from the outside of the bed, and straightened the counterpane, and in other ways made things tidy against the arrival of the doctor. She could not beat up the pillows, for she dared not move Amy, with that impending danger of the returning hemorrhage threatening her.

Then with another caution to her patient not to stir, she went out to give the two little ones their supper and put them to bed, which she did, cautioning them not to disturb their mother, who wished to go to sleep. The two children were very obedient, and laid down quietly enough on the bed that Nancy made up for them in the drawing-room.

Then, as it was growing dark, Nancy lighted a candle and took it into Amy's room.

Amy was lying in the same position, quite still; but so deathly white that Nancy took a sudden fright and stooped over her to assure herself that she was still living. When she was satisfied upon this point, she whispered:

"The children have gone to bed very quietly, my precious; and they are sleeping away like dormice."

Amy smiled and murmured:

"Owen?"

"Hasn't come in yet, honey; but I expect him every minute, and I have got his supper all ready for him."

Amy smiled again, and nodded and relapsed into silence.

There came a knock at the door. And Nancy started to open it.

"It is my boy, at last," murmured Amy to herself. "I hope Nancy will remember to tell him that I want to go to sleep, and will not let him come in here to be frightened at me."

It was Owen and Doctor Meadows.

Nancy spoke to them in whispers:

"Come in, Owen. Come in, Doctor Meadows, sir. She don't know as you was sent for, sir. I was 'fraid of 'larming her. Sit down here a few minutes, sir, if you please, while I go in and prepare her."

"How is she now?" inquired the doctor.

"Very weak, but very quiet, since the—the little loss of blood, sir," said Nancy, bringing forward chairs and then going into Amy's room.

"Miss Amy, dear, here is Doctor Meadows passing this way and calling in to see you, promiscuous like. Hadn't you better see him?" inquired the good woman, stooping low to hear the whispered answer of the patient.

"Yes; I am glad he happened to come. Bring him in. Don't let Owen come," softly replied Amy. For as the doctor really did occasionally look in when passing that way, to see how she was, Amy saw nothing suspicious in his happening to come now.

Nancy went back to the hall.

"Doctor, sir, you can come in now, if you please. Marse Owen, child, you go into the kitchen. I set your supper there to-night, as there is nobody but yourself to eat it," she said.

The doctor put down his hat and followed Nancy to the sick-room, leaving Owen to pace up and down the hall, in an agony of anxiety while waiting for his return.

Meanwhile the doctor bent over his patient, and saying first of all:

"You must not attempt to speak above a whisper or to

answer me in any other manner than in monosyllables,"—he began to examine her condition, asking from time to time such questions as she could reply to by yes or no.

Then he gave both to the patient and to the nurse the most careful directions for Amy's treatment. And then he cheerfully told Amy to take courage, for that she was doing very well; and that he expected to find her quite smart in the morning. And so he left the room.

In the hall he was met by Owen.

"How is mother, sir?" the boy asked, in a voice in which the anguish of his heart was too plainly revealed.

"She is very weak from loss of blood; but in no immediate danger."

"May I go in to see her, sir?" pleaded the boy.

"Not to-night. She must be kept as quiet as possible. I will see her again early in the morning, and after that perhaps you may do so. Good-night, Owen."

And so saying, Doctor Meadows went away.

Owen paced up and down the hall in a great trouble.

Amy, lying flat upon her back and with every sense acutely vigilant, as those of the sick often are, heard that mournful step pacing to and fro, and beckoned Nancy to come to her bed-side.

Nancy stooped to hear her whisper.

"Darken the room so that Owen cannot see how white I am, and then tell him to come in."

"Miss Amy, my dear," the woman began; but she was interrupted by her mistress.

"Raise no objections, Nancy. Do what I tell you, or else I will get up and go to my boy, if it kills me. I want to comfort him," she whispered, in a voice so husky from rising excitement, that Nancy lifted both hands in deprecation, and then went and did as she was bid.

"You had better come in and see her, Marse Owen. She done sent me to fetch you——"

"But, Nancy, the doctor——"

"Never mind the doctor now, Marse Owen. She knows you are dying to see her; and if you don't go to her she'll come out to you if it kills her. Hush, honey, she told me so with her own lips."

"Oh, Nancy!" exclaimed Owen, in a broken voice. And then he stopped and folded his hands, bowed his head and seemed to pray for strength and calmness, and then followed the woman into his mother's darkened room. He went up to her bed and bent over her. He could not see how wan her face was; yet he seemed to know it.

She could not raise her arms and clasp him to her bosom, as she was used to do; so she whispered:

"Stoop lower—lower still, my love."

And when his face was very near her own, she feebly put her hands up and took it between them, and so met his kiss.

"Can't talk much, love," she whispered.

"Don't try, mother dear," Owen began; but his voice was utterly broken, and so he stopped.

He sat down near her and took her hands between his own, and rubbed them softly, while he tried to control his emotion.

And so he remained until she fell asleep; and so he also remained while she slept on, hour after hour, until long after his usual bed-time, when at length she awoke, and seemed to try to turn over, and to wonder at her own weakness, and to strive for recollection.

Then seeing Owen sitting by her side, and Nancy at the foot of the bed, she appeared to remember what had happened to her, for she became suddenly still, and sighed deeply.

Owen stooped over and softly kissed her. And she put up her hands as before and took his face between them, and returned his kiss.

"You feel better now, mother dear?"

"Yes, better, Owen," she murmured softly. Then a

little longer she held his face between her hands, and finally said:

"Go to bed now, dear. Good-night. God bless you, Owen." And she released him.

Owen stole from the room on tip-toe, quietly enough, but when he reached his own chamber he threw himself upon his bed, and his long-restrained feelings burst forth in a storm of sobs and tears.

"Oh! mother, mother!" he cried; "oh! mother, mother! it was all for you! I lived, and worked, and hoped—all for you! And now you will be taken from me! Oh, Heaven! pity us all, pity us!"

Owen wept and prayed the whole night long.

He did not go peddling the next day, nor for many days after.

For more than two weeks Amy lay upon her back, forbidden to move, or to speak above a whisper, or to take any nourishment except cold drinks by the teaspoonful, and highly concentrated cold food by the morsel.

During all this time Owen remained at home, and the doctor visited her daily.

After this she slowly grew better, and in the course of another two weeks she was able to sit propped up in bed, and have the two little sisters with her and her work-basket before her; though at first she could work but a few minutes at a time.

She had a little hand-glass near her, and would occasionally take it up to look at her face; and then, with a deep sigh, would put it down again.

Ah! how pale and wan she now looked! except in the afternoon, when the hectic fever would brighten her eyes and flush her cheeks, and throw over her whole face an unearthly beauty.

That hemorrhage had done upon her the work of a year of ordinary consumption. She no longer deceived herself or others concerning her true state of health.

Yet she was a very cheerful invalid; sitting propped up nearly all day long, with her work-basket before her, busying her delicate fingers among the pretty lace and ribbon, and making up tasteful caps, collars, and cuffs for Owen's sales. She was happy at this work; but happiest of all when, in addition to this, she had the two little sisters on the bed with her, learning to sew upon miniature caps, cuffs, and collars, and Owen sitting beside her reading from the Scriptures or else from some good book sent her by Mr. Spicer. For the big grocer's kindness did not slacken, you may be sure, now that he feared she was going to die.

Owen went out every day upon his business; but always made it a point to come home very early in the afternoon, which he always spent by his mother's bedside, reading to her, or playing the violin, an instrument of which Amy was very fond, and from which Owen had taught himself to draw very sweet music.

Almost every day some friend from the village came out to see Amy. The Reverend Mr. Morley and his wife came regularly every week and passed several hours in her room; and before leaving, the good minister always read and prayed with her.

Mrs. Potts came twice a week, and always brought a basketful of the rarest delicacies that her culinary art could manufacture. And she almost always fell to crying over the invalid; a proof of affection which Amy met by trying to comfort her, and which Nancy rewarded by begging her to stay home if she could not come without blubbering. But this admonition of Nancy's was always delivered at the door, when she showed Mrs. Potts out.

"But it's the poor-oor chil-children I'm thinking of, Nancy. Whatever will they do?" sobbed the good creature.

"None the better for your boo-hoo-ing of their mother

into the grave faster 'n she'd go there naterally, if left to herself, mum," was Nancy's uncompromising reply.

Every alternate day Mr. Spicer walked out to inquire after Amy, and to leave a book, a pine-apple, a bottle of old port, or some rare delicacy; but he never ventured to ask to see her, nor was he ever invited into her own private room.

And so Amy was cheered by her friends, and comforted by her son. And her decline was as bright as the clear descent of the summer's sun to the cloudless horizon.

CHAPTER XXIX.

A SERENE SETTING.

Calm as a child to slumber soothed,
As if an angel's hand had smoothed
The still white features into rest,
Silent and cold without a breath
To stir the drapery on her breast,
She slept at last in death.—*Whittier.*

THE spring opened earlier and much more beautiful than usual. But Amy waned and faded. She knew now that she should surely and swiftly die. And to Nancy, who would willingly have inspired her with hope, she spoke very freely of her approaching end.

One day late in April, when the weather was unusually warm for the season, the window behind her bed was open, and Amy, lying on that side, put out her hand and took some of the swelling buds of the running rose-bush that grew beside it, and, smiling, said:

"The lovely little baby-buds are bursting into sight, Nancy; but before they bloom I shall have passed away."

"Now, Miss Amy, honey, none o' that there! none of

that there nonsense to me! I won't hear tell of it! It's worse nor calling me jass-ackses!" said the old woman.

"Nancy, dear, haven't you forgot that yet? Why, Nancy, if the Lord remembers your offences against him as you remember mine against you, you'll have a bad time of it, I'm afraid. Why, Nancy, I never meant it, you know!" said Amy, deprecatingly.

"Don't I know you didn't, honey? Who you think's a fool? Not me! 'Sides which it never hurt me a bit, nor likewise sticked in my craw a minute. And I just wish you'd begin it all over again! I'd a heap leifer you'd call me all the jass-ackses that ever crossed over the Red Sea than talk about dying, which is all an allusion on your part, Miss Amy, for you are no more going to die than I am."

"Ah, Nancy, the time for self-delusion has passed away with me—has forever passed away! I know that I am soon to die, Nancy, and I must have some one to whom I can speak freely of my approaching death. I cannot yet bring myself to break the matter to my dear boy! To whom, then, *can* I speak but to you? So do not throw back my confidence, Nancy."

Thus appealed to, Nancy answered:

"Well, I won't, Miss Amy, honey. But it is so har-ard to hear you talk so of dy-y-ing!" answered the old woman, breaking into sobs.

"There! there! Nancy dear! don't cry! Here is Mr. Spicer coming up the walk. Go and meet him, Nancy, and ask him into the drawing-room, and tell him that I would like to see him a few minutes on business. And then, Nancy, come back and set the room in perfect order before you bring him in," said Amy.

Nancy, wiping her eyes on her apron, left the room to obey her mistress's order.

And presently she came back to say that Mr. Spicer sent his respects, and would be very glad to come in.

"Shall I take the children from the room?" inquired Nancy, when she had arranged the window curtains and straightened the counterpane, and set the arm-chair in readiness for the visitor.

"No; leave the children where they are. I shall be more at my ease with them at the interview," said Amy.

"Shall I take away your work-basket, then?"

"No; I believe I shall be able to talk more freely if I have my work in my hands to look at."

"Well, then, now shall I ax him in?"

"Yes, Nancy."

"It will half break his heart, I know," muttered the woman to herself as she left the room.

The burly grocer came into the sick-room with a look of awe upon his kindly face, and stepping as lightly and speaking as softly as the gentlest woman could do.

He laid his offering—a basket of fruit and a bunch of flowers—upon the table, and then, turning to Amy, said:

"I am very glad to be permitted to see you at last, Mrs. Wynne."

"And *I* am very glad indeed to see *you*, Mr. Spicer; and to thank you for the beautiful flowers, and the delicious fruit, and all the many pleasant favors with which you have so much brightened the dulness of my sick days," said Amy, giving him her hand.

As he took that hand and felt how thin it was, and looked into her face and saw how wan *that* was, his whole frame shook with the emotion he could not conceal.

"Yes, I am dying," said Amy, with a faint smile, in answer to his look.

"Oh, I hope not! I hope to Heaven not!" exclaimed the grocer, taking his handkerchief from his pocket and wiping the drops of sweat from his brow.

"Why?—if it were not for my children, I should be willing to go."

"I hope not! I pray to the Lord not!" repeated the grocer, rubbing his forehead.

"Sit down, good friend, and compose yourself. Death is the most common-place thing in the world."

"Not to me! oh, not to me, when it touches you!" said the grocer, with a quivering voice, as he dropped heavily into his chair and continued to polish his forehead.

"Did you hear me say how much I thank you for the many favors you have shown me, Mr. Spicer?" said Amy, by way of recalling him to himself.

"Yes, I heard you, my child. And if you only knew how welcome you are—how very welcome——"

"I do know, Mr. Spicer——"

"How very welcome, my child—you will let me call you so now? I am over fifty years old, you know—quite old enough to be your father——"

"Yes, Mr. Spicer, call me your child," said Amy, taking his large hand between her own two and caressing it.

"If you knew, then, how more than welcome you are to all that I can give you, you would scarcely——" His voice broke down, and he drew away his hand to shield his eyes.

"I tell you I *do* know, Mr. Spicer. And I am going to prove how well I know by asking you to do me another favor."

"Ask it, my child! Ask whatever you please. Only don't call it a favor; for indeed you could not do *me* a greater favor than to let me serve you."

"I believe all that of your great goodness," said Amy. "And the favor that I ask of you is that you will be my children's guardian."

"Guardian?" echoed Mr. Spicer in uneasiness.

Amy did not for an instant do him the injustice to mistake the cause of that uneasiness, or to suspect him of being alarmed at the prospect of becoming guardian to three almost destitute children.

"Yes," she said, "good friend. It is true that I have little or nothing to leave my children; yet I ask you—and I ask you in preference to all others—to become their guardian. Will you do so?"

"Heaven forbid they should ever need a guardian! Yet if they do, I promise you that I will be a faithful one! More than that, a father! I will take them to my own home and treat them as my own children. I will take Owen into my own business and bring him up to enter into partnership with me at the same time that my own son does," said Mr. Spicer, earnestly giving his hand in pledge of the sincerity of his words.

Amy pressed that hand between her own two while she answered, warmly:

"Thank you! I thank you from the bottom of my heart. It is a magnanimous promise that you have made me; and I know that you would keep it."

"And Heaven knows that I would!"

"But I do not wish so to tax your friendship. I told you that I had little or nothing to leave my children. I had better tell you now that I have nothing to leave them but their liberty. And I wish you to be the guardian of their liberty. Will you be that?"

"Indeed I will! But in what particular way?"

"I will try to explain my meaning. Try you to understand me."

"I will."

"You have seen Owen. You have seen how much capacity for business he has shown for the last three years?"

"Indeed I have. He is a very remarkable boy."

"You have seen how well able he is to take care of himself?"

"Yes."

"And even of me and his sisters?"

"And even of you and his sisters. Yes, surely."

"Well, when I am gone he will be quite as well able to take care of himself and them as he is now."

"I should not wonder——" began the grocer; but his voice broke down. Any allusion to Amy's death always unmanned him.

"Quite as able then as now," resumed Amy—"but then people do not know this. So if I were to die without appointing a guardian for my children, the parish or the orphans' court, or something or other, or somebody or other, would be sure to interfere with them, and bind Owen to some trade and send the children to some asylum, or do them all some great injury of that sort, and of course with the best intentions. Don't you see?"

"Yes; nothing more certain than that Mr. Morley or some of your friends, meaning to be kind, would do just that thing," said Mr. Spicer, trying to speak steadily.

"And that would nearly ruin my boy and his little sisters. Therefore, to prevent this great wrong being done them, I wish to appoint you their guardian—to guard their liberties! that is positively all that I ask of you, and I ask it as one of the greatest favors."

"Yes, yes, my child! I understand. But now tell me what disposition you wish me to make of your children—in the event of their needing me for a guardian, which I hope they never will."

"I wish no disposition to be made of them whatever; I wish them simply to be *left alone*. I wish you to leave them just as they are. Owen will support himself and his sisters. Nancy will keep house for him and watch over them. This is a much better arrangement than any other that I could make for them. And my heart is so set on leaving them absolutely in Owen's charge, and leaving Owen his own master, that I could not die easy unless this object were secured. Therefore it is that I ask you, before all men, to be their guardian. I will draw up any sort of an instrument that may be necessary to constitute you

such. And I shall rely on your promise to his dying mother to guard Owen's liberties. And to leave him to do just as he pleases. If you are his guardian, no one will venture to interfere with him. If, after a while, his energies and his capital increase and outgrow his field of enterprise here, and he wishes to go to New York and to take his sisters with him, I desire that you will raise no obstacle to his purposes. For I have the greatest faith in my son. Under Divine Providence there is no one in the world that I have more faith in."

"I understand your wishes in regard to your children, now, my dear Mrs. Wynne! And I promise you faithfully that I will be guided by them. I will never interfere with Owen's free agency in any other way than to aid it, by furthering his purposes, whatever they may be, so far as my power extends. And here is my hand upon that," said Mr. Spicer, in a voice vibrating with emotion.

"Oh! how much I thank you, you will never know, for it is more than I can express to you," said Amy, earnestly.

At that moment Owen himself entered the room, and greeted Mr. Spicer and his mother. And the subject of the conversation was changed. Owen, with his grave and tender smile, sat down beside his mother. And Mr. Spicer, as he watched the youth, could but own to himself that Amy's plan in regard to her son was a perfectly safe one—so far as human foresight might dare to calculate.

"What day shall I call and arrange this, my dear Mrs. Wynne?" asked the kind man, as he arose to depart.

"Any day you please," she answered, gently.

"To-morrow, or the next day?"

"The next day, Mr. Spicer."

"And at what hour? Would twelve suit you?"

"Very well, indeed, thank you."

"It shall be twelve, then," he said; and he took a most friendly leave of Amy and Owen, and went away; forget-

ting, in his mournful abstraction, even to notice his little sweetheart, Gay.

Owen looked anxiously into his mother's face.

"It is a little business that I wish him to do for me, love, of which you shall be informed presently," said Amy, in answer to his look.

"Cannot I do it, mother dear?"

"You can do it in conjunction with Mr. Spicer, Owen; but not singly. It will take you both to do what I wish done. And you shall know all about it soon, my dear."

"Never poke to me *one* time. Never *one* time!" here broke in Gay, pouting in high dudgeon.

"Who never spoke to you, pet?" inquired Owen, turning smilingly to the child.

"Mr. Picer never, and *you* never, and me mad!" pouted Lily Gay.

"And ho is *me!*" added Lily May.

"What a misfortune! Mr. Spicer will cry his eyes out when he hears of it! But, I dare say, he was afraid of interrupting your work, young ladies! Let me see if I can't console you for your big lover's neglect," said Owen, and he drew from his vest-pocket a small parcel containing two little silver thimbles, which he exhibited to the children, who, reaching eagerly for the prizes, immediately forgot all about the neglect of the inconstant grocer.

The rest of the afternoon passed peacefully, as all Amy's days now did. She lay back on her pillow, leisurely working at her light business, and listening to Owen, who was reading to her from the Scriptures. And the two little ones sat playing at sewing until Nancy came in to carry them off to bed.

On the morning of the day that Amy was expecting Mr Spicer, Mrs. Potts happened to call, bringing with her, in a little basket, a chicken-salad and a Meringo pudding.

"Now, look here, mum, begging of your pardon," said

Nancy, who met her at the hall-door, "she grows weaker and weaker every day, and, as I may say, every hour. So, what I would make 'quest of you is, that you won't blubber, nor, likewise, boo-hoo, nor howl, nor nothing like it; because she ain't strong enough to bear it."

"Very well, Nancy! You are rather impertinent, and that is the sacred truth. But you mean well; and so I will forgive you, and even try to follow your advice," said the little round body, rolling herself past the servant into the mistress's chamber.

And she kept her word, though it was hard for her to avoid bursting into tears as soon as she saw Amy, and noticed how fast she had failed, even since her last visit.

She kissed her, instead. And then exhibited her viands. And Amy was really pleased.

"How good of you, dear friend! These have come just in time. I do think that chicken-salad is the only food I could touch to-day! And I will eat it for my dinner," Amy said.

To keep back her tears, Mrs. Potts began to talk fast and volubly. She related all the village news; told of all the births, marriages, deaths, and so forth. Only, she talked so much at random, that she often made the mistake of burying the young people who were married, and marrying the old people who were buried.

At last, she arose to take leave.

"Don't go yet, Mrs. Potts, please. I am expecting Mr. Spicer here with a lawyer, and I would like you to remain."

"Remain? Yes, dear, surely, if you wish me to do so; but what for?" inquired the good creature, opening her eyes.

"To witness my will. I suppose I shall require a witness."

Again Mrs. Potts was in danger of breaking her word to Nancy by sobbing aloud. But with a heroic effort she

choked down her rising emotion, though she could not as yet command herself sufficiently to speak again.

"I have not much to leave them; but I deem it necessary to appoint a guardian to protect them," said Amy, deprecatingly.

While she yet spoke, Nancy opened the door and said that Mr. Spicer and a strange gentleman were in the hall asking to see Mrs. Wynne.

"Show them in here, Nancy," said her mistress.

And the next moment Mr. Spicer entered, shook hands with Amy and her visitor, and then introduced:

"Mr. Parkinson."

Amy, in a few clear, simple words, instructed the lawyer that she wished to leave all she died possessed of to be divided equally between the three children; and that she further wished to appoint Mr. William Spicer their sole guardian.

Writing materials were placed upon the little stand by Amy's bed and Mr. Parkinson drew a chair up to it and commenced work.

It did not take the lawyer very long to draw up this simple will. When he had finished it he read it over to Amy. And she approved it and signed it in the presence of Mrs. Potts, who afterwards affixed her signature as a witness to the instrument.

"Now you keep it, if you please, Mr. Spicer," said Amy, handing it over to the grocer. "Nobody I suppose will be inclined to dispute this will that leaves three orphan children to your care. It is not as if I had left you a *fortune*," she added, smiling.

"I don't know that, my dear Mrs. Wynne. But I do know that if any one were to dispute my right to the guardianship of your children, I would spend every dollar I am worth in this world, if necessary, to establish your will," said the grocer, earnestly.

To this overwhelming profession of devotion Amy really could not find any adequate reply.

But she *looked* her gratitude, and her look was eloquent.

And soon after the newly-constituted guardian and the lawyer went away.

"My dear, had you no relations in the world to leave your children to?" inquired Mrs. Potts, pitifully.

"No," answered Amy, slowly and thoughtfully.

"None? none in the wide world?"

"No, I think not. Stay, though! I used to hear my dear mother speak of an old bachelor uncle, who was a priest, and three old maiden aunts; but they were very old then; and they must all be dead now. My mother never even saw them herself. *Her* mother was the youngest sister of the family; and she married against the approbation of the others; and she went with her husband to New York; after which she heard no more of her sisters; all communication was dropped between them."

"What was the name of the old ladies?"

"Crane. But lor! they *must* be all dead, you know. They were the elder sisters of my grandmother."

"Yes, no doubt. And your husband—had *he* no relations?"

"None in this country. Many, I think, in Wales. High and low relations; rich and poor relations. Sir Griffith Grizzly Wynne is his grand-uncle, or was; for I suppose *he* is dead. And Llewellyn ap Llanover is his third cousin. He has also relations in Chester who are druggists, and other relations who are colliers—actually. But none of the whole tribe were any thing to my husband. I doubt if any of them except the Chester druggist even know of his ever having existed," said Amy.

"Then they are no good."

"None to my children, no. No, I shall leave them to the good heart of William Spicer. Under Divine Provi-

dence I can trust them to him better than to any other on earth."

"Dear, don't mind my asking you. But didn't he love you?" whispered Mrs. Potts.

"Yes," softly replied Amy. "I know it *now*. He loved me; but with a love so pure and holy that my dear husband himself might have smiled upon it from Heaven."

Even while she spoke her voice was suddenly broken by a gurgling sound in her throat. And she snatched up a towel and crowded it to her mouth.

"My dear! what is the matter?" cried Mrs. Potts, in great alarm.

Amy gazed wildly at her; and with her disengaged hand motioned anxiously for her to take the children from the room.

In excessive trepidation Mrs. Potts pulled the two little girls down from the bed and put them out at the door, telling them to stay in the kitchen and send Nancy to her.

Then she rushed back to the patient.

Amy had fallen on her pillow, the towel had dropped from her relaxed hand, and the life-blood was welling from her lips.

"Oh, good Heaven, it is another hemorrhage!" cried Mrs. Potts, beside herself with consternation.

Nancy ran in, saw what was the matter, and, though stricken to the heart with grief, retained her self-possession, and thrust Mrs. Potts aside to attend to her mistress.

"Oh, Nancy, Nancy! Oh, Nancy, Nancy! Can I do any thing for her?" exclaimed the weeping woman.

"You can stop crying and go and fetch the doctor as quick as possible!" replied the old servant, as she stood over her mistress, wiping her lips every instant.

Mrs. Potts' gig was at the door. She snatched up her bonnet and was rushing out of the room, when Amy raised her hand.

Mrs. Potts hurried to her side, and stooped low to catch

the murmured words that came more softly than the softest notes of the Æolian harp.

"Bring William Spicer, too. It will be the last time."

Mrs. Potts, aghast with terror, hurried out and tumbled up into her gig, and started her unwilling old horse at a pace that nearly astonished him out of his senses.

Meanwhile Nancy had turned Amy gently over on her side, to prevent her strangulation by the stream that continually welled up from her lungs. And she stood by her, constantly renewing the towels under her cheek, and frequently wiping her mouth, and always absorbing that life-stream that was wasting away.

The hemorrhage ceased at length; and with a sigh of relief, Nancy removed out of sight all the sanguine tokens of the calamity; and cleansed the pillow of its marks, and sponged the patient's face and laid her back upon her pillow.

White as any lily was the lovely face, that with closed eyes, and loosened hair, lay quietly there.

In two hours, so great was the haste that had been made, Mrs. Potts came back, bringing Dr. Meadows and Mr. Spicer.

The doctor came alone into the room and up to the bedside of the patient. And nothing but his professional calmness could have prevented him from betraying the shock that he felt on seeing that bloodless face.

He made what examination was necessary; and gave all the assistance that was possible. And he sat down to watch the result.

Amy looking anxiously at him with her wild eyes, he bent low to know her wishes. Her voice was almost gone as she whispered:

"Dear doctor! Oh, try to keep me alive until my Owen comes." And the tears that she had no strength left to wipe away, overflowed her eyes.

"Calm yourself! You shall see your son."

What inspiration was it that brought Owen home in the middle of that day?

His pony-wagon drove up. Some one, probably Mr. Spicer, must have met him at the hall-door and broken the shock of the sorrow to him; for he presently entered the sick-room very pale, but very, very calm, as if some holy awe had stilled the wild tumult of grief. He came to his mother's side and bent down and kissed her, and took hold of her hands, which she immediately folded over his. A few minutes passed so, and then she whispered to his bent ear:

"Bring Mr. Spicer here."

Owen signed to the doctor, who went out and returned with Mr. Spicer and Mrs. Potts.

The big grocer bent over his "child."

"It has come sooner than I thought. I only wanted to tell you that I *do* love you like a dear, dear brother—And to say—May God bless you and make you very happy. Good-bye." She whispered these words slowly and at intervals.

William Spicer turned away. And his tears were falling like rain.

"Mrs. Potts," whispered Amy.

The hostess of the Elm Tree stooped over her.

"Good-bye. Go with Mr. Spicer into the drawing-room."

Weeping, Mrs. Potts obeyed her.

Owen resumed his place by his mother's side, and held her hand while she lay quiescent for some minutes; then she raised her eyes, and he bent to catch her words.

"The little girls—Let Nancy bring them."

Owen gave this order to the old servant, who immediately left the room and soon returned, leading in the two little sisters.

They were lifted in turn to the bed of Amy, who kissed and blessed them.

"Good-bye, Nancy. Take them with you and comfort them."

Nancy, valiantly repressing all signs of feeling, led the children out.

Once more the dying mother raised her eyes to her son. He stooped to know her will.

"Come, my Owen, sit by me with your hand in mine; keep with me to the last," she murmured.

Almost heartbroken, yet very calm, Owen drew as closely as possible to his mother; took her hand, and so remained; from time to time wiping the death-dews from her brow; or moistening her dry lips; or stooping and pressing tender kisses upon them; or joining her in silent prayer.

She made a sign to speak to him and he bent to hear her.

"Take care of Nancy when she is old and helpless," she whispered.

"Yes, dear mother, I will. I will do my duty faithfully by *all* you love and who love you," replied the boy.

She smiled on him, and then lay quite still for a long time. So long that Owen began to fear that she had passed away in that stillness.

But presently again she opened her eyes, and after gazing fixedly at some imaginary object beyond her son, she beckoned for him to stoop and she softly inquired:

"Owen, who is that standing behind you?"

"There is no one there, dear mother."

"Yes—in shining raiment—like an archangel——"

"Sweet mother, there is no one there."

"Yes! he comes nearer - how happy—how serene—how glorious he is—It is your father, Owen!" she exclaimed, as a sudden sun-burst of rapture lighted up her face for an instant, and then passed away, leaving it white and still and cold. A little time elapsed and then——

"Come away, my son," said William Spicer, who was the first to re-enter the room of death. "Come away, my son, for your mother has passed to heaven."

CHAPTER XXX.

THE ORPHANS.

A little child
That lightly draws its breath,
And feels its life in every limb,
What can it know of death?—*Wordsworth.*

I WISH to pass very briefly over the distressing days that followed Amy's death. I cannot bear to dwell upon the grief of Owen. Stout as the boy's heart was, it was indeed almost broken. By her death, he had not only lost his mother, but his bosom friend, his chosen companion, his only confidant. And he grieved without comfort. Had trouble come to him in any other form, he could have laid his head upon her dear bosom, and sobbed out all his sorrows there, and been consoled. But now he was alone in his great grief. Alone, but for his Heavenly Father, to whom he went for strength and comfort.

The two little sisters increased his distress by their artless questions. They were too old to be indifferent to the phenomenon of death, and too young to understand it.

"Why tant we go in mamma's room any more, Owey?" fretfully inquired Lily Gay, the morning after the death.

"Because, dear, mamma has gone to Heaven," answered the heart-stricken boy.

Now the children had heard of Heaven, all their little lives. And they had a general idea that it was a bright and beautiful place, somewhere up above the blue sky, full of light and glory, where angels flew about like birds, and good little children had wings.

But now, since Owen had told them that their mamma had gone there, Heaven possessed for them a new interest; and they asked a hundred unanswerable questions about that "Better Land." Especially did inquisitive Lily Gay.

"Will mamma stay long in Heaven, Owey?" was one of her questions.

"Always, darling; for those that go to Heaven are too happy ever to come back again."

"But se will tome back to see *us*, Owey," said Lily May.

"Perhaps so, dear Lily May," said Owen, hesitatingly.

"Oh! I *know* se will; mamma will tome back to see us; se love us so," repeated Lily May with an air of positive assurance.

Owen did not contradict her. How could he know whether the spirit of the mother might not return to see her children, unseen by them?

"But if mamma does mean to stay in Heaven all the time, se will send for us," said Lily Gay.

"No, se will tome herself and fetch us, won't se, Owey?" asked Lily May.

"Some day, darling," answered the boy, thoughtfully.

"And we will wear our white frocks," said Lily Gay.

On the day of the funeral, as soon as the children were dressed in their mourning, Nancy, very injudiciously, I think, took them into the drawing-room to take a last look at their mother, in her coffin, before the lid should be screwed down.

They were awed and frightened.

"Owey said mamma had gone to Heaven! What se tome back and lay down in that box for?" inquired Lily Gay, looking attentively at the marble form.

"Her soul has gone to Heaven; her body only lies here," answered Nancy.

The children both looked exceedingly puzzled.

At length Lily Gay asked again:

"Why mamma lay so still?"

"She has fallen asleep in Jesus."

"What make her so white?"

"Because she sleeps so sound."

"And what she dess in white for, and us in back? Se used to dess in back, and us in white."

"Because she is going to Heaven."

"Doing after her soul?"

"Yes, honey."

"Doing in that long box? Who doing to tarry her?"

"Oh, my baby, how can I answer you!"

"Ask Owey! Owey will tell us!" said Lily May.

"There, then. Kiss your mother, my precious children, and come away," said Nancy.

Lily Gay, standing on the chair beside the coffin, stooped down and pressed her rosy lips to the marble ones before her, and then shrank back, shivering and crying,

"Oh, so cold! oh, so cold! What make mamma so cold, Nancy?"

Lily May suddenly burst into tears.

And Nancy hurried both the children from the room.

And then they went to look for Owen, who was grieving alone in his own room. They scratched and paddled at his door, and demanded admittance.

And Owen, who even in his deepest grief was always acceptable to the children, opened the door and let them in.

And then they innocently put him on the rack by asking him all the questions that they had asked Nancy.

And particularly they wished to know how it was that, if their mother had really gone to Heaven, she still lay there in that long box.

Owen smothered for the time his great sorrow; and taking a little sister under each arm, sat down with them, and tried to make them understand how that the soul was the real person, and the only real person after all; how that the body was only the garment of the soul, just as common clothing was the garment of the body; how just as clothing may be laid aside when the body goes to bed, so the body can be laid aside when the soul passes to its heavenly rest.

But much of this was lost upon the little ones, who only

understood, or rather believed, without understanding, that it was well with their mother; that she was with the Lord in a home of bliss; that perhaps she might come to see them; and perhaps, some day, she might come to fetch them.

On the next Sunday, Amy was laid in the parish churchyard beside her husband.

And Owen and his little sisters returned to the desolate house—how desolate it was let those answer who have ever left a beloved one in the grave, and come back to the familiar place that once knew them, but now knows them no more.

But one, feeble one, had gone; and yet how empty the house seemed!

Owen hastily gave his little sisters into the charge of Nancy, and then rushed into his mother's vacant room, threw himself upon her empty bed, and abandoned himself to grief.

Oh, the dreary days that followed!

The next morning Owen went out peddling for the first time since his mother's death. But oh! the coming home in the evening and missing her loving welcome! He missed her every hour in the day and every moment in the hour. Even while he was out on his peddling tour he missed her, for he had been accustomed to think all his thoughts to her—all day long to anticipate the evening talk. But now, whenever a new purpose, new idea, or new experience occurred to him, and he impulsively thought to tell her, he immediately recollected that she "was not," and his checked thought recoiled heavily upon his heart.

Although the fact of his awful bereavement was ever present with him, he could not realize it. Every hour it smote him like a fresh blow. Thus, every hour, or oftener, though heavily oppressed with grief for her loss, he would hear, or see, or feel, or think, something which he would say to himself:

"I will tell mother about that!"

And then he would suddenly remember, and cover his face with his hands and sob.

He usually went out in the morning before the little sisters were up. So he did not often see them until the evening.

One evening, when he came home, Lily May climbed up in his lap, and put her arms around his neck, and whispered to him:

"Owey, mamma tomed to see us last night."

"What do you say, Lily May?" gravely inquired the boy.

"I seed mamma last night."

"You dreamed you saw her, darling," answered Owen.

"No! but I seed her plain—mamma!" answered the child.

And no one could persuade her that she had not done as she said.

There was some difference now made in the sleeping arrangements of the family.

Owen, in fond memory of his mother, took her room and her bed for himself.

And Nancy slept in the room with the two children, the better to take care of them.

Often in the evening Mr. Spicer came out to see Owen. The boy knew now, of course, the relation in which Mr. Spicer stood towards him and his little sisters.

"Confide in me, my dear boy. Tell me all your thoughts and wishes and purposes, just as you used to tell your mother, Owen. I will try to be both father and mother to you, as I am to my own motherless boy," said Mr. Spicer, one evening, as they sat together in the old porch before the house.

"Indeed I will, Mr. Spicer, for I know how my dear mother esteemed you. And I do thank you so much

And I know *she* does, from heaven, too," the grateful boy answered.

But apparently he had nothing as yet to confide to the grocer. He could not tell him all the little incidents of his day's tour that his dear lost mother used to find so interesting.

Other friends also came out occasionally to see how the orphans got on. For the singular will of their mother, in which she had left them only their liberty, with Mr. Spicer for their guardian, had become known to the whole of Rogues' Harbor, who criticized it without hesitation.

"The poor mother was not in her right mind," they said. "Such a thing had never been heard of before, to leave a boy of twelve years old to do as he pleases with himself and his younger sisters; and even to set a guardian over him only to *see* that he does as he pleases."

"And the will ought to be set aside. And the boy ought to be taken and bound to some respectable trade, and not allowed to go hawking wares around the country to his own ruin. And the two little girls ought to be taken and put into the Female Orphan Asylum, to be brought up to habits of industry, and taught to get their own living, and not to be left to the care of an ignorant old woman like Nancy," they all agreed.

And these people were all very well-meaning folks, and very sincere friends of poor dead Amy and her living children. But they reasoned without knowing Owen as well as Amy did.

And when they talked of setting aside the will, they reckoned without its executor, William Spicer, who, when he heard their opinions upon the subject, frankly told them that they might go to law with him as soon as they liked; but that he should spend the last dollar he had on earth, if necessary, to sustain the will of Amy Wynne.

So the good neighbors often came out to Forest Lodge, to see how the mad scheme, as they called it, worked.

And each one that came had to go back and report that it worked excellently well.

Owen began the education of his little sisters. He bought them the most attractive alphabet-books that he could find, and transparent slates, with simple little outlines of trees and houses and animals for them to trace. He did not conduct their education with any thing like regularity. For, in the first place, the young tradesman had not leisure enough at his disposal. And in the second, regularity of study would never have suited children of their tender age. But whenever Owen had an odd hour to spare, and the children were in the humor to profit by it, he gave them a little lesson in reading, or in drawing, which they always supposed to be a recreation.

And because, for the reasons stated above, these lessons were never made long enough, or repeated often enough, to weary the children, they, the children, were always eager to have them, and sure to profit by them.

And in this useful way of life, Owen spent the first two years after his mother's death.

CHAPTER XXXI.

OWEN'S JOURNEY.

His years but young; but his experience old;
His head unmellowed, but his judgment ripe;
And in a word, for far behind his worth
Come all the praises that I now bestow:
He is complete in feature and in mind,
With all good parts to grace a gentleman.—*Shakspeare.*

THE season drew near when Owen had been accustomed to send money by Mr. Lacy to purchase his goods in New York. About a week before Mr. Lacy was to start, Owen one evening walked over to his guardian's house.

The grocery was closed for the night; but Mr. Spicer received the boy in his cozy back parlor.

"Well, Owen, my lad, this is an unusual pleasure! I should almost as soon expect one of the pillars from Forest Lodge portico to walk over to spend an evening with me, as for you to do it," said the grocer, getting up from his arm-chair, laying down his book, and shaking hands with the visitor.

"You know, sir, that the evening is the only time I have to spend at home," said Owen, deprecatingly.

"Yes, I know. And you spend it there so regularly that I suppose nothing but business could have brought such a domestic youth as yourself out? Is it so?"

"Yes, sir; that is to say, I have come to ask your consent, as my guardian, to something that I want to do."

"Say my *advice*, my dear boy; and even that I can only give, with the understanding that you are to follow your own. My instructions go no further. I am the guardian of your liberty, my dear Owen, not of your person or your actions. Now, as to this matter, what is it?"

"Well, sir, I think that instead of sending for my spring goods by Mr. Lacy, I had better now go on and get them myself," said the youth.

"But," said the grocer, reflectively, "speaking as a friend now, and not as a dictator, what may be your reason for thinking it better for you, yourself, to go in person than to send by Mr. Lacy for your merchandise?"

"Well, sir," said Owen, smiling, "I scarcely like to say it, because Mr. Lacy is an excellent man, and has been a good friend to me; but the truth is, he has no new ideas, he is not progressive, and so, year after year, he brings, if not precisely the very same things, yet the very same sort of things. And besides, he may know well enough what is necessary to stock his own shop, but he does not know so well what is needed to load my wagon. Shopkeeping and peddling are not exactly the same business. And I know

if I were to go to New York in person I should see a great many things that are never brought to this remote part of the country, but which would find a very ready sale here."

"I dare say," ruminated the grocer. "But Mr. Lacy is a clever man of business?"

"Yes, sir, so he is; within certain limits; but he has no new ideas; he never originates any thing; he is not progressive. He will never be more in business than a thriving retail village shopkeeper."

"And *you* aspire to be something more?" said the grocer, smiling.

Owen smiled in return, but said nothing.

"One of the merchant-princes of the earth, for instance?"

"For the sake of others, to obtain a wider field of usefulness, and a greater power of doing good—yes, sir, I *do* aspire to become one of the merchant-princes of the country. And I know that what a youth *wills* strongly enough to do, he *can* do. And for my part, sir, I have laid out every step of my path, please the Lord to allow me to follow it. And it is also with another view to the future that I wish to go to New York this spring. I wish to make the acquaintance of the firm with whom I have dealt so long."

"Well, Owen, so long as you *want* to go, and are *resolved* to go—why I advise you to go. And I wish you a very pleasant voyage, my boy," said the grocer, with twinkling eyes.

"Thank you, sir," replied Owen, rising to leave.

"But, a question, Owen, my lad. How will you dispose of the little girls during your absence?"

"Leave them with Nancy, sir. Why, sir, Nancy has taken care of them ever since they were born, and especially since my dear mother went to Heaven. I feel that they will be perfectly safe with old Nancy. If I did not feel so, sir, I should not leave them."

"I believe you, Owen. It is all right, then. And of

course I shall run out myself once in a while to see after the little ones. And I hope you will look in to bid me good-bye before you go."

"Oh, yes, Mr. Spicer."

"By the way, when *do* you go?"

"Oh, not until this day week, when Mr. Lacy does; for I wish him to introduce me to that firm I spoke of—Abell, Brent & Campbell. So that I may afterwards deal with them in person. You will come out to see us, in a day or two, I hope, sir?"

"Yes, Owen, I will. Give my love to the little ones," said the grocer, as he shook Owen's offered hand. And the youth went away home.

The next day he broke to the little girls the news of his intended journey by telling them that he was going to New York to buy a great quantity of beautiful goods. And that when he brought them home, *they* should have the first choice of every thing.

At this the sisters were delighted. And they immediately charged him with a number of private commissions.

"Bring me a dressing-case already fitted up, Owen," said Lily Gay.

"And bring me a work-box full of little holes for spools of cotton, and thimbles and things," said Lily May.

"And what shall I bring you, Nancy?" Owen laughingly inquired.

"Bring me something or other to steady my narves and hold the ha'r on my head; for you boys do get on so fast, you make me feel as if I was in a high wind all the time. Going to New York to buy goods! *You!* Well, Lord!"

"My guardian has consented, Nancy."

"More fool he!"

Owen laughed and forbore to rebuke her. Her perfect trustworthiness covered a multitude of sins.

The next evening, as soon as Owen came home from his

peddling trip, he walked over to Mr. Lacy's shop to speak of going with him to New York.

Mr. Lacy expressed himself very much in favor of the plan. And so the matter was settled.

On the Saturday that was fixed for Owen's departure, Mr. Spicer, by previous arrangement, came over to Forest Lodge to see him off.

Owen's valise was packed; his pony and wagon at the door, and Owen, attended by Nancy and his little sisters, was only awaiting the arrival of the grocer, when Mr. Spicer walked up.

"I am glad to see you, sir. I had begun to fear that something had happened," said the youth, smiling.

"Nothing but the shop full of customers, that I couldn't get away from sooner; but now you have no time to lose. So kiss your sisters and be off, if you mean to catch the boat. I will stay here and console them for an hour or two," said Mr. Spicer, rubbing his hands with glee.

"I thank you, Mr. Spicer. They will be glad to have you, I know. But as for consolation, they don't require it a bit! Look at them! They are delighted! They regard me as a messenger going to a Fairy City to bring back the wonders of Fairy Land," said Owen, as he stooped and kissed the little girls in turn.

Then he shook hands with Nancy, saying:

"I know you don't require any bribe to discharge your duty faithfully, Nancy; but—take great care—double your usual watchfulness of the children, and I will bring you a handsome dress when I return."

"Oh, you go along, boy! Take care of the children! Who's been a taking care of them all the time you've been out peddling? Tell me that," exclaimed the old woman.

"You have, Nancy. Good-bye. I shall send the pony-wagon back by Mrs. Potts' man. Mind you don't practice any of your fascinations on him, Nancy, you know, and

detain him from his work, because he has got to go right back again to the Elm Tree."

"You go 'long, I tell you! *Fastications!* It is you that is fast, not me," retorted Nancy.

Owen laughed. Then he turned and shook hands with Mr. Spicer. And finally he jumped into his wagon and drove off.

The group on the porch watched him until his wagon was lost in the shades of the pine woods.

"Well! the boy is off on his first venture into the great world. Heaven guard him!" said the grocer, in so grave and tender a tone that Lily Gay for the first time burst into a roar; and Lily May ran in the house and hid herself to weep alone.

"Now I think that is scandalous," said Mr. Spicer, expostulating with his little lady-love, "a young lady of your ripe age to set up such a howl as that! Why, I am quite shocked at you! What would Owen think if he was to hear you? And then again! You promised long ago to marry me. Now, if you howl so much at parting with Owen for a week or two, what will you do when we are married and I take you home to keep house for me?"

Lily Gay stopped howling long enough to dart an indignant look at her big suitor, and retort:

"I don't mean to marry you at all! You are too big!"

"But you promised!"

"That was when I was little and didn't know any better!"

"Ah! and now you have grown in wisdom and in stature too! Well, I shall pine away and die, and then you will be sorry."

Apparently Lily Gay did not think there was much cause to fear such a misfortune, for she looked up at the lugubrious face of her hale lover and burst into a loud laugh.

In two hours the pony-wagon came back, driven by Mrs. Potts' man.

"You needn't take the pony out. He is quite fresh yet, and will take these little girls for a drive before he is put up," said Mr. Spicer.

The man touched his hat, jumped from his seat, fastened the bridle to a tree, and then went about his own business

"Now run and find Lily May and get your bonnets and come along," said the grocer, addressing his small sweetheart.

Lily Gay flew off, and soon returned, bringing Lily May, both quite ready for their drive.

Mr. Spicer took them by a pleasant round-about road into the town; and then to his own house, where they had dinner with a plenty of fruit and jellies for dessert. And finally the grocer brought them back home, well laden with oranges, figs, nuts and candies.

"Yes, and won't they be bilious, neither!" said Nancy, when she saw all these treasures brought into the house.

"No; they are too healthy. Let them alone, Nancy," said the grocer, as he led the pony away to the stable.

It seemed that he must have groomed and fed the pony too, for he was gone a long time. When he came back it was only to take leave of the little girls.

"And mind, Mrs. Spicer," he said to Lily Gay, "Nancy is to bring you and your sister to church in the pony-wagon on Sunday. After service you are all to dine with me. After dinner I will drive you all home and spend the evening with you. Do you hear, Mrs. Spicer?"

"Don't call me Mrs. Spicer! I like you, but I won't marry you! No, not for the oranges, nor the figs, nor the nuts, nor any thing! You're too big. Besides, when I marry, I am going to marry a great man!" said Lily Gay, tossing her pretty head.

"A great man! Why I'm a great man! a great big

man! Just now you said I was too big! There's no pleasing *you*, Mrs. Spicer."

"I mean a great *high* man!" exclaimed Lily Gay.

"Well, *I'm* a great high man, and a great broad man, too," chuckled the grocer.

"Oh! sho! I mean a President or something," said Lily Gay, fretfully.

"Here you are then! I'm a President, at your service. I'm President of the board of trustees for the poor."

"President of the United States, I mean. You know I do!" stamped Lily Gay.

"I'll run for that office immediately, Mrs. Spicer."

"No, you needn't; not for me. I like you, but I won't marry you—there! not for the oranges, nor the nuts, nor for the President either!" exclaimed Lily Gay.

"Then I'm a heart-broken man!" said the grocer, sighing dismally and dropping his head upon his chest.

Lily Gay was implacable. But Lily May stole to his side and slipped her hand in his and said softly:

"No, don't break your heart, Mr. Spicer. She'll think better of it. I'll talk to her. *I* would marry you in a minute myself, Mr. Spicer, only I couldn't bear to leave Owen."

"Ah, ha!" said the grocer, seeming to pluck up a spirit and shaking his head at his recreant betrothed. "Do you hear *that*, Mrs. Spicer? Now I know what *I'll* do. I'll court Lily May."

"No, you won't, either! You dare! She's Owen's own Lily May. Ain't you, you little thing?"

"Yes, I am Owen's Lily May," answered the dove-like child.

"And when I marry my President and go to Washington to be a great lady, Lily May will have to stay home and keep house for Owen. Won't you, little creature?"

"Yes," murmured Lily May, "always."

"Ah! I see how it is, Mrs. Spicer. You are a capricious,

unreasonable little woman. You treat me with the greatest possible disdain, at the same time that you will not hear of a rival. Well, I know what I'll do if ever you jilt me for your Presidents—I'll commit high treason !"

And with this appalling threat Lily Gay's discarded lover took his leave.

"Nancy," whispered the future President's wife, under her breath, "what's high treason ?"

"How do I know ? I suppose high treason is getting up into a high tree and shooting off your man from under its cover."

"Then when I and the President go out, we will never go near any trees. Lily May, Mr. Spicer is an awful man when he don't get his own way. I shouldn't wonder if he came to be hung some day !" said the grocer's false love, solemnly.

"Oh, no ! Mr. Spicer is good ! He is *very* good ! And there is nobody in the world better than he is ! And I love him," said Lily May.

"What ! when he threatens to get up into a high tree and pick my President off, the first time I walk out with him ?"

"I don't believe he means to do any thing wicked. But you ought not to vex him. You promised to marry him. I have heard you say it myself, over and over again. And you ought to keep your promise. He isn't so *very* big and old ! And besides he is so pleasant and good."

Mr. Spicer had given the whole of this first day of Owen's absence to Amy's orphan girls. But of course he could not give many whole days to them. His business required his attention. So after this he could only walk out to see the children on such evenings as he could close his store early, or intrust it solely to his assistant.

On Sunday, according to programme, the children were taken to church in the pony-wagon by Nancy, who was a very good driver for a safe horse. After service they were

entertained at dinner by Mr. Spicer and Bill, who accompanied them home in the evening.

Whenever Lily Gay would become sick to see Owen, Mr. Spicer would make a diversion by soliciting her to "name the day," or pressing for the immediate solemnization of the marriage ceremony; or by calling her Mrs. Spicer, as if it had already been done; all of which proved such effective counter-irritants as to change Gay's tears, like those of the insulted Queen Katherine, to sparks of fire.

As for Lily May, when she pined for Owen, she crept away to some safe hiding-place and pined alone.

Owen was expected home in a fortnight from the day of his departure—please Providence, the weather and the Sea-King.

It was in the second week of Owen's absence, when, one evening, the children, being at play on the lawn before the house, saw Mr. Spicer approach from the woods, holding up high above his head a long stick, at the end of which was a folded paper.

Both the children ran to meet him.

"Guess what it is!" he cried out, holding the stick higher than ever.

They guessed in an instant; and both spoke at once.

"A letter from Owey!"

"Yes! it is a letter from Owen."

"For me!" exclaimed Lily Gay.

"No, Mrs. Spicer, it is addressed to your humble adorer; but it is to be read for the benefit of yourself and your sister."

"If Owen don't make you stop calling me Mrs. Spicer, I'll—do something!" flashed Lily Gay.

"No, don't. It might hurt," winced her admirer.

"Oh, come in! Come in and read Owey's letter," pleaded Lily May.

Mr. Spicer took the gentle creature's hand and led her into the porch, followed by Lily Gay.

And then he read Owen's letter. There was not much in it. He informed them of his pleasant voyage and safe arrival; of the satisfactory conclusion of his business and of his purpose to sail the next day, in the Sea-King, bound for Rogues' Harbor. Then he sent many loving messages to his little sisters, telling them, among other things, that he had executed their commissions. Lastly he sent his love to Nancy, and concluded by heartily thanking Mr. Spicer for his attention to the children.

"So, if he sailed on the day he intended, we may expect him by the last of this week, my dears," said the grocer.

The little girls were delighted, and each in turn insisted on seeing the letter.

"Now let me have it to read by myself," said Lily Gay, who was the first to make the demand.

"Why, you can't read, Mrs. Spicer," said the grocer.

"I can read *reading*, as well as anybody can. And if I can't read writing, I can look at it by myself; and that will be something."

Mr. Spicer gave her the letter, and then got up to take leave of them.

After he was gone Lily May begged for a sight of the letter. And Gay lent it to her.

From that evening the children thought of nothing but Owen's return. And Nancy had a hot time of it. They worried her into making all sorts of preserves, cakes and pies to grace the arrival of their brother. As the week closed, their impatience increased. On Saturday they seemed resolved that he should come. And they had the tea-table set, and kept waiting in readiness for him.

But he did not answer their expectations. And after waiting up until the—*for them*—unusual hour of ten o'clock, they eat their supper, and prepared to go to bed. Lily May was weeping softly. Lily Gay was roaring. Even Nancy was disappointed.

"It is all along of that Sea-King, which is never punty-

well! The goodness knows if Land-King's aint no more to be depended on nor Sea-Kings I am glad we ain't got none in this country!" she grumbled, as she made her pallet down by the side of the little girls' bed.

"And Mr. Spicer didn't come either! And every thing goes bad at once!" complained Mr. Spicer's affianced.

"You know this is Saturday night, when the store is always chock-full of customers until ever so late," said Nancy.

Disappointment took the same effect on the little girls that grief usually does upon children. And they cried themselves to sleep, and they slept "like angels" all night long, and awoke on Sunday morning quite refreshed.

Nancy had the cheerful breakfast-table set, and the pony-wagon at the door.

And as soon as they had dressed and breakfasted, Nancy put them into the pony-wagon, and took them to church.

That Sunday also they had been invited to dine with Mr. Spicer; so as soon as the church-service was over, Mr. Spicer came and joined them in the church-yard.

There his little lady-love immediately taxed him with neglect in having omitted to come to see them on the preceding night, when he might have known, she said, that they were expecting Owen, and would be so disappointed at not seeing him (Owen), and would need comfort so much.

The big lover made his excuses as well as he could, and put his small sweetheart into the pony-wagon with her sister, and told Nancy to drive immediately to his house, for he should be there before them.

At Mr. Spicer's house they had another nice dinner, got up with an especial regard to little girls' appetites—a dinner of veal and chickens, with a plenty of fresh vegetables and such ripe fruit as the season would afford; and delicate custards, jellies and nuts.

And the grocer and his son rode home with them in the afternoon, and spent the whole evening with them. And

there was no Owen yet. But upon this evening the little girls were not at all distressed by his non-arrival. In fact, they would have thought it very unorthodox in the steamer to arrive on Sunday. But they felt very sure that Owen would come on Monday. And so, when Mr. Spicer was about to take leave of them for the night, Lily Gay said:

"You must come to-morrow to see Owey! You must be sure to come to see Owey!"

"Mrs. Spicer, I don't believe that you can live without me!" said the grocer, shaking hands with her.

Lily Gay stamped with impatience. And her big suitor laughed and took leave.

The next afternoon the little girls, full of hope, again prepared to receive their brother. They hurried Nancy into setting the tea-table an hour sooner than usual, so that it might be ready when Owen should arrive. And they, like little fairies, helped to adorn it as much as their skill permitted.

Lily May gathered the earliest spring flowers—those that are nurtured in the very lap of winter—snow-drops, crocusses and violets, and made what she called a "posy" to adorn the centre of the table.

And Lily Gay went hunting among the strawberry vines that were only just budding, in the wild hope of finding fruit.

Lily May was still engaged in arranging the flowers, and Lily Gay in hunting the impossible fruit, when the sound of wheels attracted the attention of both little listening pairs of ears, and one child ran out from the house and the other ran in from the garden, and both were on the lawn when Mr. Spicer and Owen drove up in Mrs. Potts' gig.

"You perceive, Mrs. Spicer, that I have brought your brother home!" sang out the grocer.

But Gay paid no attention to him; for Owen had sprung from the gig and was hugging first one little sister and then the other, and then both together.

The brother and sisters hurried into the house all locked together, and all talking at the same time, so fast and so eagerly as to be nearly unintelligible.

"Oh! so glad, Owey," began Lily Gay.

"Oh, Owey, look at *me*, too! Kiss me one more time," said Lily May.

"I do thank Heaven that I have found you safe, darling," exclaimed Owen, as he sat down on the sofa, with a sister on each side of him.

Nobody missed the good grocer, who had stopped behind to take several parcels from the gig and put them in the hall, and then to take the horse round to the stable and put him up for the evening.

After which the grocer took the parcels under his arm and marched with them into the drawing-room.

Owen was still sitting on the sofa between his sisters, telling them about his voyage; but as soon as he saw Mr. Spicer he sprang to relieve him of the parcels, which he placed upon a side-table.

"You see I would not keep you waiting for your presents, young ladies. So I had them packed up separately from my goods, and I brought them on with my personal luggage. And here they are!" said Owen.

The little girls ran eagerly to the table and watched while Owen unwrapped the parcels one by one.

There were two small dressing-cases; two work-boxes and two writing-desks. Each pair were alike, so that there was no choice between them.

"This is to encourage you, young ladies, to pay more attention to personal neatness, plain sewing, and pot-hooks and hangers, than you have been accustomed to do," said Owen, with mock solemnity.

The little girls were speechless with delight. And they could only gaze on their possessions in silent ecstasy, until Owen broke the spell by saying:

"But as all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy and

Jill a dull girl, I have brought you something else," he said, unrolling another parcel and displaying two beautiful wax-dolls. A cry of rapture broke simultaneously from the two little girls as they held up their hands to receive the prizes.

Then another actor appeared upon the scene—old Nancy—who brought in the tea and set it upon the table, and then offered her hand to Owen, saying:

"Well, Marse Owen, glad to see you back, sir. Glad to report the house stands in the same place as where you left it, and the children likewise."

"All right, Nancy! And here is a nice dress and shawl for you," replied Owen, shaking her hand, and then giving her the last of the parcels.

Nancy warmly expressed her gratitude and her satisfaction, and took her treasures into the kitchen to examine them at her leisure.

Supper being ready, they all sat down to the table. And Nancy stood at the head, and poured out the tea.

When this pleasant meal was over, and the table was cleared of the service, the little girls gathered all their new possessions and placed them upon the table, and made themselves very busy in testing all their capabilities.

While the children were thus engaged, Mr. Spicer and Owen talked apart.

Owen told his guardian that his—Owen's—expectations had been fully realized. He had formed very pleasant acquaintances, in the Messrs. Abell, Brent and Campbell And had made very satisfactory arrangements with them for the regular purchase of spring and autumn goods. Owen said that Mr. Abell, who was at the head, was a very old gentleman, who lived in retirement at his country-seat, and only came to his place of business as a matter of form. That Mr. Brent was often absent in Europe, purchasing goods directly from the manufacturers. And that Mr. Campbell was really the only working, business man of the estab-

lishment. That Mr. Campbell was always at his post; and the other two very seldom. But that he, Owen, was fortunate in finding the three partners together on one of the rare occasions of their meeting.

"And," said Owen, "they inspired me with a great deal of respect; and so I mean to cultivate their good opinion."

"You could not do better, my boy!—And, now about your purchases! Do you think you have done better by going personally instead of sending to buy your goods?" inquired Mr. Spicer.

"Oh yes, sir! Indeed I have! Just as I expected to do. I found a number of articles in New York that had never been introduced in this neighborhood, but that would find a very ready sale here."

"I am glad to hear it, my boy," said Mr. Spicer, rising to leave.

Owen got up to go out with him.

Mr. Spicer could not forbear a passing fling at his betrothed.

"Are those your wedding presents, Mrs. Spicer?" he inquired, pretending to look with great interest upon the dressing-cases, work-boxes, and writing-desks.

"Owen! make him behave himself!" exclaimed Lily Gay.

"Oh! I never like to interfere in lovers' quarrels!" replied Owen, solemnly.

Mr. Spicer fondly patted the heads of the two little girls, and then left the room, attended by Owen, who went with him to the stable to get the horse and put to the gig.

And in a few minutes Mr. Spicer was bowling on to town. And Owen came back to the drawing-room to his sisters

On account of Owen's arrival, they sat up later than usual that night. And before he dismissed the children to bed, he called in Nancy, and then knelt down with them all, and returned thanks to the Lord that he had arrived safe, and found all his loved ones at home, well.

CHAPTER XXXII.

ANOTHER ENTERPRISE.

> The keen spirit
> Seizes the prompt occasion—makes the thought
> Start into instant action, and at once
> Plans and performs, resolves and executes.—*Shakspeare.*

Several calm years passed over the heads of our young people, marked by no more important circumstance for them than that of their growth in stature, in knowledge, and in wealth.

During all these years Nancy took care of the house and of the children. And Owen pushed his peddling.

Every morning before he went out he set copies and sums, and marked lessons for his little sisters. And every evening after he came home he examined the copies and the sums, and heard the lessons. In this manner he brought the little girls forward in their education and kept up and even increased his own store of knowledge; for he learned by teaching.

On every Sunday they went to church in the pony-wagon. And on alternate Sundays Owen and his sisters dined in the village with Mr. Spicer and his son, or Mr. Spicer and his son dined at the old manor-house with Owen and his sisters.

Every spring and autumn Owen went on to New York to purchase goods. And every year he grew in favor with the firm with whom he dealt.

Thus prosperously the time passed on until the youth was eighteen years of age and the little girls were ten; when the circumstance came to pass that Owen had predicted and Amy had foreseen; and the young tradesman's energies and capital had outgrown his field of enterprise, and it was expedient to make a change.

Now, although, as we know, William Spicer was only the nominal guardian of Amy Wynne's children, and the youth was left at perfect liberty to do as he should please, yet Owen never took any important step without paying that good man the compliment of asking his consent.

It was, therefore, on a fine day in February, just before Owen's departure for the North to buy spring goods, that he walked into Mr. Spicer's store and requested a few minutes private conversation with him.

The grocer immediately led the way to his back parlor, where both sat down to talk.

"Now, then, Owen, what is it, my boy?" Mr. Spicer said, laying his hands upon his knees and preparing to listen.

"About my moving to New York, sir. The time has now come, I think, when it may be expedient for me to do so."

"Well, Owen?" said Mr. Spicer, in a melancholy tone of voice.

"You see, sir, it was quite right for me to remain here while my years were few and my means small, and while my sisters were infants and my own limited acquirements were sufficient for their needs of instruction; but now, sir, all these circumstances have gradually changed."

"Yes, Owen," said the grocer, in the same sad tone in which he had before spoken.

"I am grown up. My capital is more than I can invest in my present trade, and enough to enable me to go into business in New York. And my sisters are at an age when they require other teaching than I can give them."

"Yes, Owen," sighed the grocer.

"So I think, sir, if I have your consent and approbation, that when I go on to purchase goods this spring, I will make arrangements to commence business in New York in the next autumn."

"Yes, Owen; but why go in the autumn? Why not put it off until next spring?"

"Why, sir, because it is time to go, even now. And I should go this spring, but for one reason—that it would be a very great deprivation to my sisters for me to take them from the country to the city at a season when the country is so beautiful and the city so ugly; but in the autumn the change will be an agreeable one."

"Yes, Owen, I suppose so—I suppose so—for them and for you!"

"Then I hope I have your consent and approbation, sir."

"I have no right to withhold either, Owen. I do *not* withhold either," said Mr. Spicer, in the mournful voice in which he had spoken throughout the interview.

Owen was touched by it.

"I shall be sorry to leave you, sir," he said; "very sorry to leave you."

"And so I shall to part with you, my boy; very sorry. But say no more about it. When duty calls—*et cetera.* And I suppose duty really does call you."

"I think it does, sir," said Owen, rising to take leave.

On the next ensuing Saturday, Owen embarked once more in the Sea-King, bound for New York. And in good time he reached that port. And as soon after landing as might be he presented himself at the counting-house of Messrs. Abell, Brent & Campbell; his object being not only to purchase his spring goods, but in the present instance also to take counsel with them concerning his removal to New York.

He found Mr. Campbell, the youngest but most efficient member of the firm, present. And to him he spoke of his plan.

"You wish to remove to New York, do you, Wynne? Well, I think you are right. And I feel certain that we could offer you a position in our own house if you would

accept it. I will speak to Mr. Abell about it immediately. He is in his office to-day, and Mr. Brent is with him. Brent returned from Europe yesterday," said Mr. Campbell, who, being a man of prompt action, passed at once into the adjoining room, and soon returned, accompanied by the senior partners.

They all sat down in Mr. Campbell's room, offered Owen a seat, and then talked over the whole matter.

And the result of the conference was that the firm offered to engage Owen as an assistant, at a very liberal salary.

The young man bowed and thanked them, but seemed to hesitate and ponder before answering. Seeing his manner, and mistaking its cause, Mr. Abell said:

"The salary is a large one, Wynne - much more than I have ever given to any one of my assistants yet, and much more, I think, than would be offered by any other firm."

"I am well aware of that, sir," said Owen, smiling.

"At the same time," said Mr. Brent, "we must do you the justice to say, that we think your unusual commercial talents entitle you to an ample remuneration."

"And in two words, Wynne, we think it will pay," added Mr. Campbell.

"Come, sir! what do you say?" inquired old Mr. Abell.

Owen smiled quietly.

"Thanks, gentlemen!" he said. "I have no exception to take at the salary you offer me. It is not a question of salary. It was not my purpose to enter any one's employment; but to begin business here on my own account."

"Then you decline to enter our house?" said Mr. Brent.

"As a salaried employé only, yes, sir; but I, on my part, have a proposition to make now."

"Make it, Wynne! I can foresee what it will be; and I, for one, will favor it," said Mr. Campbell, heartily.

"Then, gentlemen," said Owen, speaking to the point. "I will enter your employment, and devote my best abilities to your interest, on condition that you will let me

have such a share in your business as my small capital will enable me to take. The question of salary is an after-consideration."

"Your proposition is a sudden one, Mr. Wynne," said old Mr. Abell.

"It has been long thought of by me, sir; and I do not press for an immediate answer from you. My wish is to have an interest in something that has within it the elements of growth and progress. So I would rather have the smallest share in your business than the highest salary you could give me. Take your own time to consider of it, gentlemen."

"I do not think it requires much time," said Mr. Brent. "We have known you a good while, Wynne; and we know something of your character and competency."

"Certainly," agreed Mr. Campbell.

Nevertheless, conservative, cautious old Mr. Abell insisted on having a day or two to think the matter over.

Owen assured them that they could take a week or two; or a month or two, if they pleased; as he should not be able to remove to New York before the autumn.

And then the young man applied himself to his more immediate business of selecting his stock of goods.

The next day, however, the partners arrived at a unanimous decision to take Owen on his own terms. And it was farther agreed that young Wynne should join them as early as the first of September.

When the Sea-King sailed on the return-trip Owen was one of the passengers. And he for once had a quick passage, and reached home in good time.

Owen was delighted with his success; the dream of his past few years was fulfilled, and he was to be a partner, though at first a very subordinate one, in the great firm of Abell, Brent & Campbell.

As soon as he landed at Rogues' Harbor, and before

going home to Forest Lodge, he called on his guardian to report progress.

Mr. Spicer received him with great cordiality, and invited him into the back parlor, where they again sat down to talk.

When Owen had told Mr. Spicer the history of his interview with Abell, Brent & Campbell, and the terms upon which he had concluded an engagement with them, the grocer said:

"I do not wonder, Owen, that they agreed to your terms, though those terms were rather unusual. For they knew as well as I do, that your business tact and talent will be of incalculable value to them. I only wish my Bill was like you! But I cannot get him to give the least attention, or take the smallest interest in business," he concluded, with a deep sigh.

"Sir, do not blame him; he dislikes trade as much as I like it. And he likes the study of medicine as much as I dislike it. Why, sir, whenever he comes over to our house, he goes mousing among my father's old medical books, and he gets one and reads it with as much avidity as if it was a sensation novel! Let him follow the bent of his genius, sir. Let him study medicine; and you will find that he will be no laggard at that."

"Easy talking, my dear boy; but how is he to study medicine in an out-of-the-way place like this?"

"Let him go into Doctor Meadows' office, sir. Doctor Meadows has no student. Let Bill go there, sir, for a year or two; and then let him go to some medical college in some large city, and attend the lectures and walk the hospitals."

"I will think of your advice," said Mr. Spicer, as Owen arose to go, for he was in haste to meet those dear sisters who were always the first considerations of his life.

It was still early in the afternoon when he reached Forest Lodge. The front door of that secluded house was never

locked during the day-time. And so Owen opened it and walked into the drawing-room, where the little girls sat making up trimming for sleeves and collars.

Both looked up on hearing the door open. And both sprang to meet him.

"Oh, Owen, what a surprise! We didn't look for you to-day!" said Lily Gay, as she threw herself into her brother's arms.

"And *you*, are you not glad to see me too, Lily May?" inquired Owen, as he let his sister go and drew the other little girl to his heart.

"Oh, yes, indeed, Owen; you know I am."

Old Nancy heard the noise and came in to welcome Owen.

"Come back safe once more, has you? Well Lord, it is wonderful! For every time you leaves the dry land to go upon the stormy seas I expects you to go to the bottom in a high wind and come home drownded. Well, here you is safe and sound once more. But take care! the pitcher never goes to the pump so often but it comes home broke at last," was Nancy's cheerful greeting to the returning voyager.

"Why, Nancy, I do believe you feel injured every time I return safe. You feel as if your predictions *ought* to be fulfilled once in a while in common justice, don't you? But I tell you what, Nancy, if I had gone to the bottom this time, a very handsome straw bonnet of yours would have gone down with me," replied Owen.

"Oh! Ah! Hum! As if I would a-cared for the bonnet being drownded when *you* was gone. Why, I'd never a-worn nothing but a black bombazine bonnet ever after. For I likes you, boy, though you do try me, with your venterous ways a-keeping of me in a panic all the time."

"Well, now, Nancy, if you *do* like Owen so much, get tea ready for him directly, will you?" asked Lily Gay.

"I gwine to. Kittel's b'iling now," said the old woman hurrying from the room.

The little girls made haste and set the table.

After tea was over that evening, Owen called in the old, faithful friend that had been like a mother to his orphan sisters so many years, and made her take a seat among them.

And then Owen told them of his intention to remove to New York in the autumn.

Had a bomb-shell fallen and burst among them, it might have produced more consternation, but could scarcely have occasioned more astonishment.

The children were struck dumb for the moment; but whether from delight or despair, remained to be seen.

As for old Nancy, taken by surprise as she was, she would not allow her prophetic character to suffer by appearing not to have foreseen the whole thing from the first.

"Well, Lord, and so it's come at last," she said. "And I knowed all this running back'ards and for'ards from York to Rogue and Rogue to York wa'n't a-gwine to turn out to no good. And now you're a-gwine to York to live. And you're a-gwine to your ruination. And a-gwine to git in with a lot of undecent city young men as never go to bed no night under ten o'clock, I'll take my davy! And you'll learn to smoke cigars, and drink rum, and swear, and carry a cane, and let the h'ar grow all over your mouth, and altogether get to be such a disrespectable young cuss as I shan't like to own you."

Here the faces of the silent little girls expressed despair rather than delight.

"Oh, Nancy, Nancy, you are such an irreclaimable croaker that I never will believe but what your soul once animated the body of a raven," said Owen, shaking his head at her.

"Oh, there! what did I say? He is a-l'arnin' to swear even now; for I never did, no, I never did, hear harder swearing than that! And I'd like to know what you mean by calling of me horrid names, sir?"

"I mean, Nancy, that you are such a persistent prophet of evil that, if people minded you, they would be afraid to be born."

"Well, and a good job, too; for it would be better for one-half of them if they never *had* been born. And better for you, too, if you go to York and fall into sin and folly."

"Don't worry about *me*, Nancy. If I were inclined to sin and folly, I could fall into them here in the country just as easily as in New York. It is not the place, Nancy, but the person, that makes the danger," said Owen, with so much cheerful assurance that the faces of the little girls cleared up.

"Well, Marse Owen, you can out-talk me, if that will do you any good. And you can outstand me, if that will do you any more. And if you are determined to go to York, why, to York you will go, and that is all about it."

"Not quite all about it, Nancy, for I am determined to take you with me."

"Well, you needn't talk so big about it, neither. 'Cause you couldn't take me if I was bent on staying here. And, moreover, you couldn't leave me if I was bent on going 'long of you."

"Such being the case, I should like to know your decision, Mrs. Nancy," said Owen, solemnly.

"Which it is to go 'long o' you, and to see the end of you, whether you like it or not."

"Well, Nancy, I should like you to go with me; but I shouldn't like you to see the end of me, unless you mean to live half a century longer," said Owen.

Then seeing how doubtfully his little sisters looked upon the whole matter, he turned to them and explained enough of the nature of the change to please them with it.

And the little girls went to bed that night to dream of the wonders of Fairy Land, as represented by city life.

Owen had several little affairs to settle preparatory to his removal. One was to find a successor to his business

connection in the neighborhood. Another was to give the house-agent notice that he should leave Forest Lodge in the autumn. To both these affairs he attended on such rainy days as precluded him from going around the country peddling. First, he advertised for a young man with a small capital to purchase his business. Then, he waited on the house-agent to warn him of his intended departure.

"Which falls out very conveniently, Mr. Wynne, as I am in receipt of a letter from the owner of the house, in which he expresses his intention to come and take possession of it on the first of next October," said the agent.

"I am glad of that. I have grown to be fond of the old place, and should not like to see it left unoccupied, to fall into a state of dilapidation again; nor yet should I like to see it pass into bad hands. I suppose the owner will reside there permanently."

"Yes, I suppose so. It appears that he is to be married some time between this and the autumn; and means to bring his bride here."

"In the present condition of the house?"

"I suppose so. He gives me no authority to go to any expense for alterations. And as for necessary repairs, I do not think the house needs any now. You have got it into very good order, in the time you have lived there, Mr. Wynne."

"Well, sir, as we paid no rent, I felt it to be my duty to put the fine old place in something like decent repair. And I have done it, gradually, to be sure, but as fast as my means would allow. Mr. Stukely is coming on the first of October, you say, sir?"

"Yes."

"We shall be out by the first of September. And I shall take care that we leave every part of the house in as comfortable a condition as circumstances will permit, for the new-comers," said Owen, rising to close the interview.

From the house-agent's, Owen went to the post-office,

where he found a letter in answer to his advertisement. The letter stated that the writer would like to see the advertiser to confer with him upon the subject of buying the business, if he, the advertiser, would appoint a place of meeting. And the letter was signed "JAMES STUKELY."

Owen rubbed his eyes and looked again. But there stood the name unchanged.

"It is the same name, but it may belong to another man," said Owen, and he took the letter and carried it across the street to the house-agent, and laid it before him, requesting him to read it.

"Why, this is from the master of the manor!" said the agent, in surprise.

"I knew it was the same name, but I doubted whether it belonged to the same man," said Owen.

"Of course it did. Look here," said the house-agent; and he took from his desk the letter that he had received from the same person by the same mail, and opening it, showed the handwriting and the signature to his visitor.

"Yes, I see. But what does it mean? Mr. James Stukely cannot intend to turn pedler?"

"Oh, no! certainly not, assuredly not; not likely—a gentleman of standing. I beg your pardon, Mr. Wynne, I meant no offence," said the house-agent, suddenly recollecting himself.

"No offence is taken, I assure you," answered Owen, with a smile.

"But now, about this business? As the gentleman cannot mean to purchase it himself, he may, perhaps, intend to buy it for some young protegé."

"Yes, I think that quite likely," said the house-agent.

"Then, if you will accommodate me with writing materials, I will answer the letter immediately, and appoint the meeting here, which I suppose will take the writer as much by surprise as his letter took me."

The house-agent gave Owen the freedom of his writing-desk.

When Owen had written and posted his letter, he returned home.

And at tea that evening he informed his sisters that the master of the property was coming to reside in the house about the first of October; and that he would probably purchase the peddling business for some young protegé.

"For some young prodigy! Well, Lord! What next? And if the young man is a prodigy, why don't he do something for himself, like our Owen, and not wait for a gentleman to buy him a business," grumbled Nancy.

"Oh, Nancy, Nancy, how you do lose your way among words," laughed Owen.

One week from this time Owen received another letter from Mr. Stukely, saying that it was "extraordinary" his correspondent should be the very tenant of the very house he was going to take in October, and that he should present himself on the first of the ensuing month.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

AN IMPORTANT ARRIVAL.

The ways of Heaven are dark and intricate,
Puzzled in mazes and perplexed in errors,
Our understanding traces them in vain,
Lost and bewildered in the fruitless search,
Nor sees with how much art the windings run,
Nor where the regular confusion ends.—*Addison.*

On the day appointed for his interview with Mr. Stukely, Owen remained at home to receive his visitor. As it was his habit to improve every hour of his time, he determined to employ his leisure while waiting for Mr. Stukely in reviewing the progress lately made by his sister in their

education. As the morning was fine, he told the girls to bring their books to the table before the open window. And he was standing there, examining his pupils in their geography, when Mr. Durkee's hackney-coach, the only public vehicle to be hired in Rogues' Harbor, drove up.

A gentleman and lady, in plain travelling dresses, alighted and walked up the front steps to the door and knocked.

Nancy answered their summons, and presently threw open the drawing-room door, and announced them as

"Mr. and Mrs. Stupid!" adding in a lower tone, "The prodigy people!"

And Mr. Stukely advanced into the room, leading his bride.

Owen and his sisters arose to receive them.

"Mr. Stukely, I presume," said the young man, offering his hand.

"The very same! And you are Mr. Wynne?"

"Yes."

"And this young lady is Miss Nelly Blythe."

"My dear!" exclaimed the young lady, in a warning whisper.

"Oh! true! Extraordinary! I beg your pardon, my love! It was all through speaking in haste! Mr. Wynne, this young lady is *Mrs.* Nelly Blythe—I mean Miss James Stukely!—I should say, Mrs. James Blythe!—Confound it! Extraordinary!" exclaimed Mr. Stukely, growing more and more confused, and blushing and floundering fearfully.

The black eyes of the little lady beside him flashed threateningly.

And Owen hastened to say:

"Mrs. James Stukely, I presume, sir?"

"Exactly, yes, that is it!—a wife of mine! But as she married me only a few days ago, I haven't got used to her yet, you know! And it is so—extraordinary!"

"My sisters, sir," said Owen, presenting the little girls, by way of a diversion.

Lily Gay held out her hand to welcome the strangers. But Mr. Stukely saw only Lily May, and falling back a step and lifting up his hands, he exclaimed:

"Extra—ordinary! Extra—ordinary!"

"What is, sir?" inquired Owen, who begun to think that he had a harmless lunatic for a visitor.

"That child! Extra—ordinary!"

"Will you be seated, sir? Madam, will you take this chair?" said Owen, courteously.

Mrs. James Stukely threw herself impatiently into the rocker that was offered her. But Mr. James Stukely stared and stared at Lily May, who, abashed by the fixed gaze, but too gentle to resent it by turning away, stood and dropped her head and blushed.

"Lily Gay, take your sister into the next room," said Owen, in a tone of rebuke, meant for Mr. Stukely's instruction.

"And I hope the queer gentleman will know Lily May again when he sees her!" flashed Lily Gay, indignantly, as she led her companion away. "He must think she is one of his *prodigies!*" she added, flinging back this sarcasm as a parting missile, as she passed through the door.

Mr. Stukely wheeled as mechanically as a man turned on a pivot, or a needle following the magnet, and now stood gazing at the closed door through which Lily May had passed.

"What is there about that little girl which excites your astonishment, sir?" coldly inquired Owen.

"The likeness!" exclaimed Mr. Stukely, coming to himself.

"The likeness to whom, if you please?" farther inquired Owen.

"To a cousin of mine! Why, look here, you know. It is like seeing Cousin Gladys herself through the belittling end of a telescope. Extra-ordinary."

"Ah, yes; that was the girl they wanted you to marry," said Mrs. James Stukely.

"Yes, Miss Nelly—I mean Mrs. Blythe—it was; but I didn't seem to see it. She couldn't hold a candle to you, and I told them so."

"Excuse me, sir, but who is the lady of whom you speak as bearing so striking a resemblance to this little girl?" inquired Owen, with more depth of interest than he had hitherto felt.

"Mrs. Powis, sir."

"Mrs. Powers! Was she in Rogues' Harbor, do you know, about nine years ago?"

"No, I do *not* know. Nine years ago; that was a very uncomfortable time to me, that I don't like to remember at all. Nine years ago I parted with her quite suddenly; and, to tell you the sacred truth, I was very glad to get shut of her, not meaning any reflection on her, however. And I would have been very glad to have got shut of all my female relations in a bunch, at the same time,—not meaning any disrespect to the ladies,—but they were an—extraordinary trial to me."

"Do you know where this lady—this Mrs. Powers—is now?" inquired Owen.

"No; and not wishing to give you a short answer, I don't care. When we parted so suddenly, she went to Europe, and I went to the deuce. Since which I have not heard a word of her. But, excuse me, I did not come here to tell of her, whose very name makes me tremble to this day, but of business."

"Excuse *me*, sir. One more question and I have done! Did this lady, Mrs. Powers, leave a child?"

"I don't know. I tell you I don't know any thing about her after she sailed for Europe."

"But—previous to that time?"

"Previous to that time she had no child. She had been married a year; but the devil, in order to lay a trap for

my soul, had fetched her husband; so that she was separated from him until just before she went to Europe, when they met, under extraordinary circumstances which I cannot bear to recall, and they went abroad together; since which time, as I said before, I have not heard one word about them."

Deeply as Owen was interested in this subject, he did not now press for further information; but told Mr. Stukely that he was ready to proceed to business at once.

"Well, you see," said Mr. Stukely, "this is just where it is: That I find myself a poor gentleman, twenty-seven years of age, without fortune, or profession, or trade. All I have is this old house and the little piece of land around it; and about five hundred dollars of my own; and about three hundred of Miss Nelly's—I mean Mrs James's—all of her own savings. Now, you know *that* money would not support us a year in the city. So I just took counsel with Miss Nelly and we agreed to throw ourselves back upon our strength of mind and cut the world, before it got a chance to cut us; and to come down here and live cheap and invest the money in the light peddling business. Don't you see?"

"Yes," said Owen, "and I think the prudence of the measure indicates that it must have originated with Mrs. Stukely."

"Extraordinary! How did you know that? Yes, it did originate with her. She is a very clever woman, is Miss Nelly. She is the young lady who made my shirts at college; and that is how I formed her acquaintance. And really she made them remarkably well; and that is how I came to marry her. But now about my going into this business: Miss Nelly—Mrs. James, I mean—said plainly that if I could not support her in my rank of life, I must come down to hers. Don't you think that was sensible?"

"Very."

"And to be sure there was nobody to be offended either

by my marriage or my business, except an only mother, who is running around loose among the fashionable circles of Europe, where she is likely to stay. I got tired of it at last, because I never *could* learn foreign languages, and so—well, I suppose as I was of age, you can't call it running away—but I bid her good-night one evening in London and took the express train to Liverpool, and breakfasted on board the American steamer next morning. But really now—you wouldn't call it cutting and running, seeing that I was of age, would you?"

"Certainly not."

"Well, then, seeing that when I landed in New York my shirts were very much out of order, I went down to Charlottesville to see Miss Nelly to get her to put them into repair. And when she saw the state of my wardrobe she told me that she thought I had better take her along with me, to keep it in order——"

"*Oh!* James Stukely! How *can* you tell such a fib?" said Mrs. James, blushing violently.

"My dear, you *know* you did! And I think it was a very sensible suggestion! Don't you think so, Mr. Wynne?"

"Decidedly," said Owen, smiling.

"And so I agreed to it right on the spot. And I requested Miss Nelly to pack up her things immediately. But she reminded me that there was a customary form to be gone through first. Then I offered to go and get the license and the parson directly. But she told me that she must have her dues of courting. So I courted Miss Nelly for four weeks, quite in the regular style, while she made up her wedding clothes, you know; and then we were married. And here we are. And now, don't you think we were right?"

"Quite so."

"And then Miss Nelly suggested the way of life that I mean to engage in. Now, I dare say, there are a great many people who will say that it is very odd for a man of

my birth to engage in perambulatory commerce, commonly called peddling. But I must do *something* for a livelihood, you know."

"Of course."

"Now if the world would pay me a salary for being a gentleman, it might reasonably object to my doing any thing to earn money. But as it is never likely to do any thing for me, it may hold its tongue, I say. And don't you think *that* is sensible?"

"Decidedly so."

"And yet there are people — my only mother among them—who will tell you that I am *not* sensible. Now, really, you know, what do you think?"

"I certainly think that, in deciding to work for your living, you show great good sense," said Owen.

"I am glad to hear you say so. And now let us attend to business in real good earnest."

As young Owen Wynne was honest and liberal, and James Stukely was simple and confiding, the terms of the transfer of the business were soon satisfactorily arranged between them.

And then Mr. James Stukely arose to leave.

But Owen begged him to be seated a little longer, as he had something farther to propose.

Now to explain Owen's present course towards his visitor, it is only necessary to say, that although he was ten years the junior of Mr. Stukely, yet he felt towards his successor very much like an experienced elder brother might feel towards an unsophisticated younger one who was just starting in life; he felt like warning, advising and assisting him.

Moved by this kindly interest, he inquired:

"Where do you go from this place, Mr. Stukely?"

"Well, I hardly know. I must dispose of myself and Miss Nelly as well as I can until you are ready to give us possession of the old house. Our luggage is at the Elm Tree, and perhaps we may stop there. I suppose that

would be as economical a plan as any other. And really, you know, we must study economy," said Mr. Stukely, frankly.

"Then why not stop here?"

"Stop here? Oh, I never thought of such a thing!"

"Think of it now."

"Oh, I *couldn't* think of hurrying you out before you are ready to go."

"You need not do that. You can come in with us."

"Oh, I wouldn't intrude on you for the world."

"But it would be no intrusion whatever. This house is big enough for half a dozen such families as ours. We can all live here very comfortably for a few months. And by being here you will find the cost of living for yourself and wife a mere trifle. And you were so confiding as to tell me that economy is an object with you."

"Ah! isn't it? And you are very good! very kind and thoughtful! And really, now—indeed, if I was sure we shouldn't be intruding on you, or taking an unfair advantage of your generosity—Miss Nelly, what do *you* say?" stammered Mr. Stukely.

"I say that you had better thank Mr. Wynne and accept his offer," said Mrs. Stukely.

"Extraordinary! That is just what I think. Mr. Wynne, I thank you, and I accept your offer."

"You are quite welcome. And we will be ready to receive you this evening, or at any time," said Owen.

"This evening then let it be, Mr. Wynne; for now that we have settled the *question*, I felt quite anxious to settle *ourselves*. So we will only go back to the Elm Tree to pay our bill and fetch our baggage. Mr. Wynne, I feel as if I had known you all my life," said Mr. Stukely, rising and taking his new friend by the hand.

Owen cordially returned the grip, and then the visitors went away.

Owen had a scene in prospect with Nancy. So he

thought he would go into the kitchen, and get it over, and off his mind.

The old woman was washing vegetables to put into the dinner-pot.

"Nancy, as soon as you have time, I want you to prepare the large front chamber that used to be mine for visitors."

"For *which*?" demanded Nancy, sharply.

"For visitors. That young married couple are coming to stay with us, until we go away in the autumn, and after that they will remain here in possession," said Owen, firmly.

"*Visitors!* Well, Lord! what next? Them prodigy people, too."

"We must make them comfortable, Nancy, and treat them respectfully."

The Lilies were sitting upon the broad window-sill, capping strawberries, and listening in astonishment to Owen's words.

"Oh, Owen! they are not going to stay long, are they?" inquired Lily Gay.

"Yes, love; and you must be kind to them."

"Then the man will have to stop staring our Lily May out of countenance, for I won't put up with *that*, anyhow!"

"You must not mind his ways, my darling. You must be good to both of the visitors. You will be so, I am sure, when I tell you that they have *no brother or sister in the world to love them*," said Owen, artfully.

"Oh, poor things! No brother like we have. Lily Gay, the man may stare at me as much as he pleases, if it will do him any good. And I shall not mind it so very much. It can't really hurt me, you know," said Lily May, gently.

"He sha'n't do it! I mean to be good to the poor soul; but I don't mean to let him trouble *you*, Lily May. If he does he shall march! I am the mistress of the house!" said Lily Gay, with great dignity.

"I don't think that our visitor will offend in the same manner again, young ladies," said Owen, as he left the kitchen.

The young couple arrived in time for an early tea. And Mr. Stukely had discretion enough to govern his eyes and refrain from staring at Lily May. And "Miss Nelly," as her husband persisted in miscalling her, soon made friends of the little Lilies.

And after tea, when they were all gathered around the table with their evening work, Miss Nelly interested herself in their crochét, and taught them several new stitches.

Upon the whole the simple-hearted young man and his lively little wife made quite a pleasant addition to the family circle at Forest Lodge.

On the next Monday, Owen proposed to Mr. Stukely that he should accompany him on his peddling trip, to get some insight into the business, and become acquainted with the customers.

And Mr. Stukely gratefully agreed to the proposal; and accordingly set out the same morning, with Owen.

And after that he accompanied Owen every day, and was in this manner initiated into the business, as well as introduced to the connection.

One subject of care pressed heavily upon Owen's heart—the alleged likeness between Lily May and that Cousin Gladys, of whom Mr Stukely had spoken—that "Mrs. Powers," who had stopped for a few hours at Rogues' Harbor, and had shown such a deep interest in the child.

The circumstance of "Mrs. Powers" visit to Rogues' Harbor had almost passed from Owen's mind, until it was recalled by the words of James Stukely. There had been no very striking likeness between the lady and the baby at the time that Owen had seen them together. And since that time the growth of the child had been too gradual to attract attention to her growing likeness to the

lady, whose features were slowly fading out of the youth's memory.

But now that the words of James Stukely had recalled the whole affair to the mind of Owen, he distinctly recollected the countenance of the lady, and recognized the strong likeness between herself and Lily May.

And now Owen determined to find out all that he could of the history of "Mrs. Powers;" and to do this, not in any surreptitious manner, but by plainly asking Mr. Stukely to give him the information, as soon as a more intimate acquaintanceship between himself and his guest should justify the request.

Up to this time neither of the Lilies knew but that they were really sisters. Lily Gay, who was a few weeks younger, was so much taller and stouter, and so much more self-willed and confident than the other little girl, that she really imagined herself to be the elder sister; and, as such, claimed to be the mistress of the house. In mercy to the poor outcast child, no one in the family had undeceived them; the secluded life they lived prevented others out of the family from doing so.

And now, Owen, in seeking to gain all possible information concerning her family, determined to do it without betraying the fact that Lily May was not his own sister.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

A CHANGE OF ABODE.

Mine own stout heart,
You and I must never part—
But bravely get on together,
Through calm and strife,
And the ups and downs of life,
In winter or summer weather!
For a brave, glad heart shall always be
Beating in its own warm nest with me,
Tho' the mountains be drown'd in the rolling sea!—*M. F. Tupper.*

One fine morning, when Owen and his guest were driving together in the pony-wagon on their peddling tour, Mr. Stukely, being in a communicative humor, talked a great deal of his mother, a Mrs. Llewellyn.

"She has been away so long, she must like to live abroad," at length said Owen, by way of saying something polite in reply to his companion's monologue.

"Well, no; I don't know that she does," frankly answered Miss Nelly's husband.

"Then I wonder why she does it!"

"Well, the fact is, that some years ago there was a slight misunderstanding between my mother and the laws of the country. And my mother, who won't bear contradiction, just up and left the country to get along as well as it could without her. Don't you think that was spirited?"

"It was perhaps judicious," said Owen.

"Yes, and it was spirited! She is a very high-spirited woman, is my only mother!" said Mrs. Llewellyn's son, triumphantly.

Owen fell into grave thought. He was deeply impressed by what he had just heard. He wondered what could have been the nature of that offence against justice which

Mr. Stukely had gingerly described as a "misunderstanding with the laws," and which had banished his mother from her native country. He suspected it to be in some way connected with that sudden parting between Mr. Stukely and his cousin, of which Mr. Stukely had spoken with so much of nervous irritability; and that it might possibly concern Lily May. He wished to question his companion, but from motives of delicacy forbore to do so. He lost nothing by his forbearance.

Mr. Stukely's fit of communicativeness was not half exhausted, and he presently voluntarily declared:

"It was all along of her wanting to marry me to Cousin Gladys; and if you won't mind, I will tell you all about it as we go on."

"It will be very interesting to me; and I shall be much obliged to you," replied Owen.

"Ah, indeed! Well, I will tell you, then. I would rather do so, because I don't want you to think that any mother of mine had to leave on account of manslaughter, or grand larceny, or forgery, or any thing like that; no, it was just simply what I said. And this was the way of it."

And here Mr. Stukely began, and in a rather rambling and incoherent manner, told all he knew of the history of Gladys.

"Well, you see my Cousin Gladys was only son and heir—no, I mean only daughter and heiress of General Llewellyn, of Kader Idrys."

"That's a place in Wales."

"No, it is a place in Virginia, named after the place in Wales. And Cousin Gladys was its heiress. She wasn't my own cousin, you see."

"No?"

"Oh, no; only by marriage, and not much by that. You see, I'm the son of an only mother by a *first* father. I had two fathers, but only one mother."

"Your mother was married twice?"

"Extraordinary!"

"What is?"

"That you should know that without my telling you! My first father was a Stukely, and I was his son. My second father was a Llewellyn, and I was his step-son, and that was the way I came to be Cousin Gladys's cousin. Do you see?"

"Oh, yes."

"Well, when Cousin Gladys was about sixteen years old she lost her parents; and my only mother went to Kader Idrys to take care of her; and she brought me with her. Don't you think that was sensible?"

"Very."

"All this time Cousin Gladys was engaged to a fellow of the name of Powis, whom my mother couldn't tolerate, seeing that he was only a midshipman, with nothing but his pay. And she wanted Cousin Gladys to marry me, and me to marry Cousin Gladys. Well, I had been brought up to obey my parents, and so—though I did like Miss Nelly no end—I agreed to take Cousin Gladys."

"The rich heiress?"

"Yes, but she wouldn't hear of it. She never did appreciate me as Miss Nelly does! So she went off and married the middy."

"And then?"

"Then he *disappeared*."

"Disappeared?"

"Yes; it was thought he was murdered and his body made away with."

"And then?"

"Then, after three or four months, my mother tried it on again for a marriage between me and Cousin Gladys. But this time both of us opposed it."

"I should think so."

"Yes, but look here—talk about the three Fates and the

three Fairies! You better have to oppose *them* altogether than my only mother! She got us down to Kader Idrys, and there, in spite of all we could say or do, she got us up before the parson to be married. But, then, Cousin Gladys got desperate—called my only mother a traitoress and a murderess, and called me all the noodles and poodles she could think of, and threw herself upon the protection of the parson. Of course the marriage was stopped."

"And what next?"

"I went back to college, and consoled myself with Miss Nelly, until the autumn, when my only mother wrote to me to come to New York, where she and Cousin Gladys was staying. And do you think, when I got there Cousin Gladys didn't do me a second time?"

"She did?"

"She *did*. My only mother bullied us up before the parson to be married, when Cousin Gladys saw somebody in the church that she took for that fellow, Powis, turned up, and she gave a screech and fainted, and the marriage was broken off a second time."

"But I do not understand how your mother could have gained such an ascendancy over your minds."

"That's because you don't know my only mother. And maybe you'll be more astonished still when I tell you that I allowed Cousin Gladys to do me a *third* time!"

"A third time!" exclaimed Owen, in utter amazement.

"Sure as you're born, I did! This was at Kader Idrys again! I do believe my only mother cast a spell over us both. Any way, we were standing up to be married, when in bursts—who do you think?"

"The missing husband?"

"Extraordinary! How did you know that? Yes, I'm blowed, if that fellow hadn't turned up again, and in good earnest, too! Wasn't there a row, neither? Our marriage was stopped for good and all, then. And my only mother took me to Europe."

"That was the occasion upon which she had the misunderstanding with the laws?"

"Yes; and that's the reason she stops over there now. But I got tired, and cut and run, and came over here and married Miss Nelly, as I told you."

"But where had the missing husband been in all the months of his absence?"

"I never rightly understood; but I *have* heard that he had been spirited away and put into a private mad-house, from which he at last made his escape; but indeed I don't know whether that was true or not."

"Why was your mother so anxious for you to marry your cousin?"

"Well, my only mother was poor, and so was I; and Cousin Gladys was the richest heiress in the Old Dominion. And if I had married her my only mother would have had 'the world in a sling,' as you may say."

"But the great fortune would still have been your wife's and your own, not your mother's."

"Hum! no matter whose it would have been in law, it would have been my only mother's in fact. Why, laws, I don't believe Gladys or I would have been let to spend a dollar without her leave!"

"I see! I see it all now! It was to have the spending of the revenues of that great estate, she plotted," mused Owen. And he arranged the disorder of the narrative; and stored it all up in his memory, with the determination to reduce it all to writing as soon as he should return home.

Of course there were some important facts connected with the case, of which Mr. Stukely, himself being ignorant, could not inform Owen. For instance, the facts of the drugs being administered to his cousin and to himself; the residence of Mrs. Llewellyn and her charge at the old house; and the circumstances attending the birth of Gladys' child. And there were other facts that he could relate but could

not explain. For instance, the supineness of will with which both he and his cousin consented to a marriage that was so very repugnant to both; and the manner in which the law had taken hold of his mother for her hand in that business.

And yet all these, first and last, were the very facts which most concerned Owen to know and to understand.

One hiatus in the narrative Owen's shrewdness quickly detected. And this hiatus answered in point of time to the very summer of Lily May's birth. So he inquired:

"Where did your mother and the young lady go, after that first interrupted wedding at Kader Idrys?"

"They went travelling for Cousin Gladys' health; but where, I don't know. In the autumn they fetched up at New York. And they sent for me. And Cousin Gladys did me a second time, as I told you."

"It is a wonder to me, after *that*, how you should have allowed her to 'do' you the third time."

"So it is to me. Extraordinary! For after I found out that she was so set against me, all my liking for her went off. For what was the use of my keeping on liking a girl that didn't appreciate me?"

"None in the world."

"Especially, when I knew a nicer girl that *did* appreciate me?"

"Exactly."

"And so after that last caper of Cousin Gladys in the New York church, I just fell back upon my self-respect, and I resolved that I would never give her another chance to fling me off at the altar, nor call me any more imbeciles and idiots, and noodles and poodles; I would go right off and tell Miss Nelly that *she* might have me! But there stepped in my mother again, and threatened to do something desperate if I did; and she alluded to hanging herself, which gave me such a tightness in the throat, and

fulness in the head, as made apoplexy imminent. And I was very glad to unpack and promise to stay."

"But still you haven't told me how you came to be caught a third time?"

"That is just what I never could comprehend. However I did come to be such a mean cuss as to stand up to be married to Cousin Gladys the third time, is one of the greatest marvels of my mind. It must have been witchcraft. And if they had taken up my only mother on a charge of sorcery, I for one should have suspected she was guilty. But as they didn't take her up for sorcery, bless me if I know yet what they *did* take her up for," concluded Mr. Stukely.

Owen relapsed into deep thought. He had now scarcely any doubt that Lily May was the child of Gladys. He knew what was his own painful duty under the circumstances. But he was glad that the absence of Gladys on long and distant travel rendered present action on his part unnecessary.

When he had got home and had tea, that evening, he went to his own room, and put the story that he had heard into writing, and locked it up in his strong-box with the memorandum left him by his mother.

After this he came down to join the party in the drawing-room, whom he had found gathered around the table, looking at the daguerreotype that was being passed from hand to hand.

"As we were talking so much about my only mother, I thought I would show you her daguerreotype. So I brought it down. And the little girls are looking at it. Would you like to see it?" said Mr. Stukely, turning to Owen.

"Very much," replied the young man.

Mr. Stukely opened the case and passed it to his host.

Owen received it and looked at it. He did not start, or exclaim; he was too much self-possessed to do either, even

when he recognized in the likeness before him the remarkable features of the woman who had come to him in disguise and tried to get from him Lily May.

And now he had not a doubt in the world as to her (Lily May's) parentage.

There were several more points upon which Owen required information; and he felt that there could now be no impropriety in his seeking it from Mr. Stukely. He therefore inquired:

"Where is Mrs. Llewellyn now?"

"How should I know? I left her in London. But I left in a manner which might have been called cutting and running if I had not been of age. And consequently I did not ask her for her plans for the summer, and therefore I do not know them. Nor did I leave her my American address, and therefore she cannot write and tell me of them."

"But now that you are safe on this side of the ocean, where you say she cannot come, might you not write to her, and would not your letter find her at the same place you left her?"

"Well, no; not at all likely. The London season is over, and the fashionable people have all left town; and my mother may be at Stockholm, or St. Petersburg, or Tobolsk, for aught I know; for I believe the north of Asia is the great go for fashionable tourists this year. And to tell you the sacred truth, even if I knew her address, which upon my honor I don't, I shouldn't think of writing to her."

"I am sorry to hear you say so."

"Yes, I know. She is my only mother, and all that. And really I have a very great regard for her. And I wouldn't allow any man to impose upon her, or say a word against her; and even if it came to a set-to between her and the laws of the country, I would take sides with her against the laws of the country, even if it cost me my life,

fortune, and sacred honor. *Vide* Declaration of Independence."

"And yet you wouldn't write to her, even if you knew her address?"

"*No!* You know the old saying—'It is well to let well-enough alone,' and 'It is ill waking sleeping dogs.' So, great as my regard is for my only mother, I have come to the conclusion to let her alone, if she will let me alone."

"Your mother's bankers would be likely always to know her address. Do you know her bankers?"

"Blest if I think she has got any! She is her own banker. She takes her money about with her and speculates."

"In the stocks?"

"Well, no; I rather think it is in the cards—in whist, and loo, and such."

"Ah! Do you think she knows where your Cousin Gladys is?"

"Who?—mother? Bless you, no! not likely. My mother keeps out of Cousin Gladys' way, for the same reason that I keep out of my mother's way. 'Ill waking sleeping,' *et cetera.*"

"And you have no idea where either of your relatives may be at this time?"

"No, I haven't. Extraordinary!"

"What is?"

"The interest you take in my relations. Really it is more than I take myself."

"*You* have inspired me with the interest, however," said Owen.

"Ah, indeed! Have I really? Well, but you're very good! Now, this is what I call having a hearty sympathy for a fellow! Well, now, I feel that I have made a good thing of it by coming home to America. I have found a wife, I have found a business, and I have found a friend!" said Mr. Stukely; and in the exuberance of his self-congrat

ulation he started up and kissed "Miss Nelly," and shook hands with Owen.

"'A fool for luck,'" muttered Nancy, who happened to be in the room, putting some china away in the closet.

"What did you observe, Mrs. Nancy?" inquired Mr. Stukely, innocently.

"I wish you luck," replied the woman.

"Oh, thank you, Mrs. Nancy; I must shake hands with you, too," said Mr. Stukely, darting towards her.

"Better not! I have been washing dishes, and my hands is greasy."

"Never mind that, Mrs. Nancy! They are honest, hard-working hands, and I shall be proud to shake either or both of them."

Nancy wiped her fingers on her apron, and then held them out to Mr. Stukely, saying:

"Now, I *do* wish you good luck."

Mr. Stukely returned to his seat. And the evening passed pleasantly.

And many more serene summer evenings followed.

Owen was well pleased that, through ignorance of the whereabouts of Lily May's relatives, he was for the present relieved from the trying duty of seeking them out for the purpose of restoring her to them.

And thus the summer passed, and the time drew near for their departure to New York.

Early in September, Owen made a complete transfer of his stock to James Stukely, and received the price for it. He also engaged to purchase new autumn goods in New York for his successor, and to send them on to him.

While Owen was settling his own business in Rogues' Harbor, Nancy and the little girls were busily engaged in packing up all such personal effects as they intended to take with them. The whole amount was not great—the family clothing, the household linen, the bedding, the favorite old china tea-service, and their mother's rocking-

chair and work-stand; these were all carefully packed, and sent to Rogues' Harbor, to be put on board the New York steamer. The remainder of their furniture, together with the horse and wagon, was sold to Mr. Stukely.

They were to sail in the steamer that was to leave Rogues' Harbor for New York on Saturday.

On Friday evening they gave a farewell tea-party to all their friends who would take the trouble to come out so far as the Old Lodge, to pass the last evening at home with them. As the little family were very much beloved and esteemed by the community, and as the evening was very fine, the mustering of friends was very large.

Old Mr. and Mrs. Morley and their family, Mrs. Potts and her daughters, Mr. Lacy, Mr. Durkee, and, lastly, Mr. Spicer, his son, and his assistants.

"For on such an occasion as this, my dear boy, I closed the store for the whole evening; I couldn't bear to keep it open. I cannot help it, my dear boy, I cannot help it; but I do feel as if it was my own son and daughters that were going away from me, and these tears will fall. I suppose I am a very weak old man!" he said, as he took Owen's hand on meeting him.

"A strong, good, wise man, Mr. Spicer. And wherever we go, and whatever may be our lot, we shall always cherish your memory with the deepest respect and affection," said Owen, earnestly, pressing the big hands of the grocer.

"Oh, don't grieve, Mr. Spicer, please don't grieve. We all love you so dearly. And we will love you as much when we are far away as we do now," said Lily May, creeping to his side, and getting hold of one of his hands and fondling it.

"Oh, my darling," began the grocer, but his voice broke down.

"Now, see here," said Lily Gay, coming up on the other side, and getting his other hand, and laying her cheek against it, "sooner than you should fret so much, I will

come back (as soon as I have had one little peep at New York, to see what it looks like, I mean), I will come back and stop with you, and be your daughter! Indeed, I will, Mr. Spicer! Owen and Lily May can get along well enough without me. I am not Owen's favorite sister; everybody knows that; so, he won't miss me much; and I will come back and keep house for you, and be your daughter always. Kiss me, now, and don't grieve any more."

"Heaven grant me that some day you may really be my daughter, sweet child!" said William Spicer, stooping and pressing his lips to her upturned forehead.

"And mind, I am in earnest, Mr. Spicer! I am, indeed!"

"I know you are, my darling. And we will think about it after a while," said the grocer, smiling, and turning away to conceal his emotion.

Owen followed him.

"There is many a true word spoken unawares, Mr. Spicer, and Heaven may yet give you that child for a daughter to cheer the evening of your good life," said Owen, soothingly.

"Would you like that, my boy?" smiled the grocer.

"Of course I should, if those most concerned liked it."

"What! as ambitious as *you* are?"

"I do not know a worthier object of ambition than the promotion of home-happiness," said Owen.

"Well, my boy, I say again, may Heaven grant me the blessing! But, it is a long look a-head you take, Owen."

"I have been accustomed to do so all my life, Mr. Spicer," said Owen.

"Ah, my boy, how good you and those dear children are to try to disperse my gloom at parting with you. And how wrong I am to overcloud the last evening of your stay with such gloom. Come, I will be cheerful!" said the grocer, with an effort at gayety, as he joined the company in the old drawing-room.

As they were all now assembled, tea was soon served.

The tea-table had been set in the long dining-room. And the best taste of the little girls had been exercised in arranging upon it the white china service, and adorning it with the most beautiful of the autumn flowers, and enriching it with the most luscious of the autumn fruits. And the greatest culinary skill of Nancy had been exerted in covering it with every domestic luxury in the form of tea, coffee, and chocolate; bread, butter and cream cheese; cakes, muffins and biscuits; jams, jellies and preserves; as well as the more substantial fare, for those that liked it, of broiled ham, venison and fowls.

A large and cheerful party gathered around this well-spread and inviting board.

Lily Gay sat at the head of the table and Owen at the foot. Their guests sat down in rows on either side. Lily May, on the left hand of her sister, helped to fill the cups, which Nancy, with tray in hand, stood ready to carry around.

It was a very pleasant and long-protracted feast.

And when it was at length over, the company left the table to scatter themselves over the grounds around the house, to enjoy the balmy evening air, and the beauty of the sunset.

After an hour of rambling, they began to call for their gigs and horses, and prepare to return home.

In giving his farewell tea-party, Owen had had another object besides that of making an opportunity of taking leave of all his old village friends at once—and this was to present his successors to their new neighbors, and thus leave the worthy young couple surrounded by an agreeable circle of visiting acquaintances. And Owen was pleased to see that in bidding good-night to Mr. and Mrs. Stukely, the guests pressed the newly-married pair to come and visit them.

Mr. Spicer did not go away with the others. He re-

mained with the little family until bed-time. And on leaving them said:

"Owen, my son, as I am the last to leave you to-night, so I shall be the first to greet you in the morning. I will go with you to the boat."

And with these words he took leave.

When Mr. and Mrs. Stukely had retired to their room, Owen, who acknowledged his Creator in every act of his life, called his little household together for their last evening prayers at Forest Lodge. And in conducting their devotions, he earnestly thanked his heavenly Father for the peace and prosperity that had attended their lives at the old mansion-house, and fervently prayed his blessing and protection on their departure and progress.

And then they separated for the night.

Very early in the morning the little family assembled in the old drawing-room, where the breakfast-table had been set.

Mr. and Mrs. Stukely had risen before their usual hour to see the travellers off.

Owen was very grave, realizing for the first time the sadness of leaving the old home endeared to him as the last scene of his mother's life, and hallowed by her death.

The Lilies, who remembered no other but this, were divided between fond regret at leaving it forever and eager anticipation of seeing the "strange new world" that lay beyond their limited experience.

Their large luggage had all been sent on to the steamboat the day before. And now the pony-wagon stood at the door to convey themselves away. And Mr. Stukely, who considered Owen as his benefactor, and was always anxious to serve him, had offered to drive them to town, and bring back the wagon. And Owen had thankfully accepted the offer. So when they had breakfasted, nothing remained for the travellers to do but to put on their outer

garments, take a long, last look around the familiar house, kiss "Miss Nelly" good-bye, and jump into the wagon.

As soon as they were seated, Mr. Stukely started the pony at a brisk pace.

As long as the wagon remained in sight of their old home, the little girls sat with their faces turned towards the house, kissing their hands to Miss Nelly, who stood upon the porch, waving her handkerchief in adieu.

No one spoke but Nancy, who, after remaining silent for a few moments, burst forth in the following cheerful strain:

"I know we are all going to our ruin! I know it as well as anybody does. But that's no reason why you two should be a-turning of yourselves into pillows of salt by staring back'ards all the time."

"Is it a sin to look back, Owen?" inquired Lily Gay.

"No, love, it is not a sin; but Nancy is a raven."

"A-raving am I? I am no more raving than you are yourself. I'm a-talking of the soundest sense. We *are* going to our ruin. Don't *I* know we shall all go to the bottom in a high wind and be drowned before we get to York? And when we *do* get there, don't I know as that young man will fall into all sorts of temptation, and sin, and danger? Tell me! *I* raving. It's you that's raving, 'stracted mad!" said Nancy, with a violent shrug.

Owen and his sisters were too well used to Nancy's humors to take offence at them; but Mr. Stukely turned and looked at her in astonishment, exclaiming:

"Extraordinary! It is a wonder to me, Mrs. Nancy, that, under these circumstances, you consent to go at all!"

"I done promised to see the last of him, and I means to see the last of him. Yes, even if he comes to be hanged—which the goodness knows he may—going plunging into all sorts of temptations with a perfect recklessness," rejoined Nancy.

And this desperate answer shut Mr. Stukely up for the rest of the ride.

When they entered the Pine Woods, and the Lilies could no longer see their old house, they turned their attention to the familiar objects along the road that they were passing for the last time.

Deep in the woods they came to a gigantic old pine-tree, a favorite resort on account of its enormous size and fabulous age; and while passing under it, they made Mr. Stukely draw up while they stood on their seats and broke off twigs to carry away as mementoes of that Titan of the forest.

A little farther on they came to a spring, which for its clearness was called, in the homely language of the country, "Clean Drinking." And they made Mr. Stukely stop the wagon while they got out to take a last drink of the water, and to fill a bottle with it to carry away.

Still a little further on, and they crossed a brook, and again they made Mr. Stukely pause and wait while they got down and gathered up some pebbles to take with them and keep in memory of that stream.

Owen submitted to these frequent stoppages the more readily because they had plenty of time before them, as it was not yet nine o'clock, and the steamer would not leave the wharf before twelve.

This brook was, however, the last place at which the Lilies wanted to stop before entering the village.

At this inland entrance to the village stood, as you may remember, the parsonage and the parish church. They had passed the parsonage and were driving slowly past the church, when Owen gravely laid his hand upon the reins and said:

"Draw up to the gate and stop here, Stukely. We have another parting to go through. Remain with the wagon, if you please, while we go in."

Mr. Stukely understood Owen so well that he only nodded in reply.

Owen and his sisters left the wagon and entered the church-yard. At this early hour of a busy week-day the place was entirely deserted. Owen and his sisters took their silent and sorrowful way down a shady path to an obscure corner where, under the spreading branches of a great oak-tree, side by side were their parents' graves.

In silent reverence they knelt down beside that sacred dust—Owen in the middle and a sister on each side of him. And Owen with an arm clasped around each sister, whose young heads rested on his bosom, prayed for them and for himself, that they all might be saved from the temptations, sins and perils that might in the future beset their youth, and sex, and circumstances; that they might be converted truly to the Lord's righteous service, and confirmed in it; that they might be saved and blest in time, and in eternity, and so once more meet their father and their mother in Heaven.

Owen, of course, distinctly remembered both his parents as though he had lost them but the day before.

The Lilies had only the faintest memory of their mother, as of some angel who had been with them in the dawn of their existence and had passed away to Heaven.

But something in the tender solemnity of the scene touched and melted their hearts, and they burst into tears and sobbed aloud.

Owen clasped them closer to his heart, and held them so until they had sobbed themselves into quietness. Then he arose to his feet and stooped to lift them up.

And then he was conscious, for the first time, of some one near him. He turned to see who it was, and he recognized Mr. Spicer, who was standing there with his head reverently bared, and his face pale with sympathy.

"I was with you, beside her death-bed, my boy. Is it wrong that I should be with you here?" he said, holding out his hand to Owen.

"Oh, no, good friend, it is right!" returned the young man, clasping that honest hand.

The girls had stooped to gather handfuls of grass from the graves to carry away as sacred relics. But on hearing Mr. Spicer speak, they both started up and both clasped his disengaged hand.

And so they all turned from the graves and walked towards the gate.

"I will see to that dear spot, my boy. The grass shall be always green there, and the flowers always blooming, in their season."

"I know it, Mr. Spicer," said Owen, warmly.

"And mind, and don't forget, Mr. Spicer, that I will come back to you and be your daughter as soon as ever you will let me," said Lily Gay.

"I shall never forget your promise, my darling," said the grocer.

And by that time they had passed through the churchyard gate and reached the wagon.

Mr. Spicer lifted the little girls in turn to their seats. And then Owen requested Mr. Stukely to drive on to the steamboat wharf, adding that he and Mr. Spicer would walk on together.

The wagon immediately started.

As Owen had already taken leave of all his village friends, there were no more stoppages for him on the road; and so he and his old friend reached the wharf about as soon as the wagon did.

When Nancy and the little girls alighted, Mr. Stukely shook hands with them all around and started for home, saying in explanation of his departure, that he was afraid Miss Nelly would mope.

When he had gone, carrying with him fresh messages of love from the little girls to Miss Nelly, the travellers went on the boat, accompanied by Mr. Spicer.

As there was an hour yet to spare before the starting of

the boat, Mr. Spicer sat down with his young friends on a bench on the upper deck, and sad though he was, suffered himself to be amused by the sisters, who had never before seen a steamboat, and who were therefore full of demonstrations of surprise, delight and curiosity.

"Humph!" sniffed Nancy. "It's my hopes as you will like it as well at the end of the v'yage as you does at the beginning. But just wait until you get out at sea, will you, and the boat is a-pitching and a-tossing like a egg-shell on b'iling water, and then see how you'll like it!"

"Owen," said Mr. Spicer, in a low voice, "is it well, do you think, to take such a malcontent, such a grumbler, such a croaker as that old woman with you? Is her effect upon your sisters good?"

"Oh, bless you, Mr. Spicer, poor old Nancy's feelings are so much better than her acts, and her acts are so much better than her words, that we must put up with the latter. She loves us and we love her, and as for her croaking, we are so used to that we don't mind it at all; we scarcely hear it, in fact; 'it goes in at one ear and out at the other,' to use a homely phrase," laughed Owen.

At this moment the steamboat bell pealed forth its warning for all who were not passengers to go on shore.

Still Mr. Spicer could not tear himself away from those young friends, who were as dear to him as his own son. He arose to his feet, but he lingered in his leave-taking.

"In a month from this time I shall go on to New York to make my purchases, Owen. And then I shall see you again," he said.

"And then you must come to us, instead of going to a hotel. We shall be house-keeping, you know, and we shall always have a spare room for you when you come on in the spring and the autumn," said Owen.

"I shall look forward to those two periods as the brightest of the year, my boy!"

"Are you going *on* the boat, sir?" inquired the captain's clerk, passing that way, and speaking to Mr. Spicer.

"No," answered the grocer.

"Then you had better go *off* the boat, sir, or you will be taken to sea."

"Blest if I care if I am!" said the grocer, smiling.

Then with a sudden overclouding of his countenance, he said:

"I must go! Good-bye, darlings! Good-bye, old woman! Good-bye, Owen! Heaven forever bless you, my dear, dear children."

And he wrung the hand of Owen, and hurried upon the wharf just in time to save himself, for the gang-plank was immediately drawn away, and the boat started.

Owen stood, with folded arms and thoughtful brow, watching the receding village, with its crowd of idlers on the wharf, and the form of the good grocer hurrying up the main street.

The girls wept a little at parting from their friend; but soon the motion of the boat, the sparkling of the waters, and the novelty of all around them, raised their spirits and dried their tears.

As the boat moved out to sea, they, sitting on the bench of the upper deck, and watching the fading shore sink down beneath the horizon, heard a good deal of talk among the passengers that walked up and down, about the "Equinoctial gale," and the probability of encountering it. They knew well enough that this Equinoctial gale was one of those fearful semi-annual tempests in which so many ships are lost. So at length Lily Gay asked her brother:

"Is there any danger, Owen?"

"None, love. We are now early in September; by the blessing of Providence, we shall be in New York by the middle of the month, and the storm need not be expected until the last of it."

"Very well, then," said Nancy, who was sitting near,

"who make you a judge of Marster's works? The storm will come when He pleases."

They smiled on her and let her growl.

And Heaven smiled on them; for not only then but during the whole voyage they were blessed with beautiful weather.

The winds were so light, and the waves so calm, that none of the party grew sea-sick. And all day long, and every day, the Lilies remained on deck enjoying the brightness of the sky and the balminess of the air. They had scarcely grown tired of this marine holiday, and were just beginning to be impatient for the next change of scene to the wonderful city to which they were bound, when, one morning, on rising and going out on deck, they found themselves in New York harbor, approaching the city.

"Did you ever!" exclaimed Lily Gay, gazing in amazement on the forest of shipping through which they were now making their way to the pier, and then upon the wilderness of houses beyond. "*Did* you ever!! What a place!!! What do you think of it, Lily May?"

"Why, I think," said the other little girl, thoughtfully,—"I think that it looks like Rogues' Harbor, grown up."

The boat struck the pier with a shock. Owen came for the girls; and they soon found themselves in all the bewildering confusion of the crowded pier.

"Stay with each other and with Nancy while I call a carriage," said Owen, plunging into the thick of the crowd to fetch the required vehicle.

"Cling to each other and to me for dear life, or you'll be kidnapped and carried off, first thing!" said old Nancy, who, burdened as she was with carpet-bags, shawls, parcels and umbrellas, hovered over the two girls like an anxious old mother-hen over her chicks.

The frightened girls clung fast enough to their moorings, else they would certainly have been washed away in that rough sea of rushing people.

"*No!* you owdacious riporate; I *don't* want no porter! Wait till you're axed!"

This, or something to this effect, was always Nancy's reply to officious offers of service. But when these offers became importunate, she did not hesitate to drop her burdens at her feet, and lay about her with her umbrella to keep intruders at bay.

At last Owen came, pushing his way through the crowd. He took a sister under each arm, told Nancy to follow with the light baggage, and so wedged their way to the carriage, that stood waiting for them at the corner of the street. He put his sisters and Nancy inside of it; followed them; and gave orders to drive to the quiet family hotel where he had been used to stop on his short business trips to the city, and where the people knew him favorably.

He took a pleasant, retired room, high up, in the sixth story, for his sisters. He saw them into it; told them to ask the chambermaid for any thing they might want; said that he was going out, but should return to the one o'clock lunch; and then, as it was still early in the morning, he set out to walk to the house of Messrs. Abell, Brent & Campbell.

The chambermaid came up to attend upon her young guests. But the girls wanted nothing but to stand at their high window and look out upon the fields of slated roofs and groves of chimney-tops around them; and down into the deep, well-like, and crowded streets of the great city—Rogues' Harbor grown to maturity, as Lily May persisted in calling it.

At twelve o'clock Owen returned, attended to his toilet, and took his sisters down into the coffee-room to lunch.

After lunch, he told them that he had done a great deal of business that forenoon. He had seen Mr. Campbell, of "the firm," and had engaged to enter upon his duties on the ensuing Monday. He had got the address of the cottage in Hoboken that had been taken for him by Mr. Camp-

bell. He had seen to the unlading of their household furniture, and had started it by the ferry-boat for its destination. He had got the address of an excellent "Ladies' School" in the immediate neighborhood of their future home. And now nothing remained for him to do but to pay the little hotel bill, and take them to the Hoboken Ferry—if they were ready to go.

The eager girls were ready for any thing that could be proposed by Owen. And while he went to settle the bill, they put on their bonnets. And in a few minutes they were rejoined by Owen, who said:

"It is but a short distance to the ferry. Would you not rather walk it?"

"Oh! a great deal rather; for then we can look at the shop-windows," said Lily Gay.

"And we can help Nancy to carry the parcels," said Lily May.

Owen turned smilingly to their over-burdened servant, and took from her three or four shawls, which he threw over his arm, and two or three umbrellas, which he carried in his hand. And then he told Lily May that Nancy could very well carry the rest.

And so they walked to the ferry and went on the boat—the boat looked so much like a mere continuation of the pier that Nancy did not know when she had passed from the one to the other; and when the boat moved from the land, she seized violently hold of Owen and cried out, in a voice of dismay, that a part of the city had broke loose and was floating away with them.

Owen had some trouble in convincing her that it was only the leviathan ferry-boat crossing the North River, and not half of New York going to sea!

In a few minutes the boat landed on the opposite shore. And Owen and his sisters, with their old servant, stepped upon the pier.

"It is but a short walk to our cottage," said the young

man, leading the way through the crowded thoroughfare to the entrance of a rural-looking lane, and along that lane for half a mile, until they reached a small, brown cottage, standing alone in the little garden, facing the North River.

"This is our home," said the young man.

"Ah, Owen!" said Lily May, "it is so beautiful! We shall all be so happy!"

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE COTTAGE.

The little cottage stands
Half hid in climbing green;
Spreading along the jagged eaves,
And o'er its roof, 'tis seen.
Before it are a few meek flowers,
But parterre there is none,
But grass with flowers, as if Art once
Her work had there begun,
Then balked by Nature turned and left
These flowrets to her hand
That now to wild flowers changing seems,
Where mid the grass they stand —*W. W. Lord.*

It was a brown wooden cottage, a story and a half high, surmounted by a steep roof, and surrounded on three sides by a broad, covered porch. Before it lay a front yard, enclosed in a white-washed trellis fence, and filled with shrubs and bushes and vines, growing in neglected, wild and beautiful luxuriance.

They entered by a green wooden gate, and passed up a short, paved walk, and stepped upon the porch. The hall-door and parlor windows opened upon this porch. White curtains fluttered from the parlor windows, and at the hall-door stood the girl who was in temporary charge of the house.

This girl courtesied to the new-comers, and addressing Owen, said:

"If you please, sir, the last furniture came about two hours ago, and I had it put into the spare room as you directed, by the man that brought it."

"Quite right," said Owen; "and now will you be so good as to show these young ladies their room?"

The girl civilly courtesied to the sisters, and turned to conduct them.

But the Lilies sprang past her, and ran all over the little house, in eager impatience.

First they ran into the parlor, a pleasant room, lighted by four windows—two front and two back—draped with white muslin curtains; it was plainly furnished with a pretty carpet, neat chairs and tables, and a comfortable sofa that stood between the front windows. From the parlor they rushed into the dining-room, which was also the kitchen, and which was fitted up with plain carpet, a parlor cooking-stove, a dresser and all other necessary appointments. From that they ran out into the hall again, and up the stairs, where they found four light, airy, spacious chambers, three of which were neatly arranged with white beds and white window curtains, and every convenience for sleeping or dressing. The front room over the parlor they knew was to be their own, because it had two little white beds in it; to say nothing of their trunks that were placed in the recesses each side of the fireplace. They ran up to the white enamelled dressing bureau that stood between the front windows, and looked into its glass, and drew out its drawers.

"Oh! how new and how pretty every thing is! This bureau is for both of us, Lily May! So you may take the two lower drawers, as you are the littlest; and I will take the two upper ones because I am the biggest!"

"Take which you please, Lily Gay, only do try and speak correctly, as Owen begs you to do, and say the upper two

and the lower two—and not the two upper and the two lower," said her companion.

"School-marm!" said Lily Gay, teasingly, but not spitefully.

And then they rushed down-stairs to the hall, where they found Owen settling some matters with the temporary caretaker.

"Oh, Owen, what a beautiful little home, and what beautiful furniture! You never told me a word about how lovely every thing was going to be!" said Lily Gay, eagerly.

"I meant to surprise you, pet. And besides, I did not know *exactly* how lovely every thing was going to be myself. I simply sent a sum of money to our good friend, Mr. Campbell, and described what sort of a home would suit us, and requested him to employ a house agent and an upholsterer to prepare such a one for us; and here is the result."

"And it is charming! Oh! I like this pretty cottage with its enamelled furniture and white curtained windows, and water view, so much better than I did that dreary old mansion, with its dark mahogany and its dingy chintz, and its pine forest."

"Oh, Lily Gay! don't say any thing against the dear old house that we have left. This is very sweet! very sweet indeed! but let us not forget the poor old home either!" said Lily May, tenderly.

"Owen, if Lily May don't stop school-marming me, there'll be a row presently!" exclaimed Lily Gay, as she bounced away into the kitchen to see what was going on there.

Nancy was there; and she had laid off her bonnet and shawl and was preparing tea, with the help of the temporary housekeeper, whose assistance was required chiefly to show Nancy where to find such things as she needed.

"And pray what might your name be?" inquired Nancy. "For I am just tired of calling of you by no name."

"Bridget, sure," answered the girl.

"Bridget Shore! Well, lord! and here is one of them already! Bridget Shore! Young 'oman! I have heern tell of *Jane* Shore; and never heern any good of her! Now if you're any kin to *she*, you'd better tramp at once; 'cause we don't want no sich in *this* house!"

"Eh?" inquired the Irish girl, innocently.

"I axes you is you any kin to that there Jane Shore as we heer tell of in the old times?"

"No."

"You're not?"

"Divil a bit."

"What's divillybit? I don't believe you can speak the English langwidge!" said Nancy, contemptuously.

"If you please, ma'am, as I have showed you where to find every thing, and the young master has settled with me, I had better go home."

"I think so, too! 'Cause 'taint a bit clear as you're not ascended from Jane Shore."

"Shall I light the gas fust, ma'am?"

"The *which*?"

"The gas."

"*Gas*?"

"Yes. It is only just been laid down in our lane. And the gentleman who took this house for the young master had the pipes put in."

"What—the—name o' the law—is the gal a-talking about?" said Nancy, staring.

"The gas, it is. I asked you if I should light it."

"*Light gas?* Is the gal raving 'stracted mad? Why, gas is foul vapor, as is subject to dry wells, and vaults, and cellars, and coal mines, and sich shut-up holes which—which—when so much as a single spark of fire gets nigh it blows up the whole place."

"It is this," said Bridget, pointing to one of the burners that stood at each end of the mantel-shelf.

"*That!* Why, that's a little iron image of a man with a sarpint in his hand."

"See me light it," said Bridget, taking a box of matches and going up to the burner.

There was still daylight enough coming through the west window to show the whole process. And Nancy, with a dark, doubtful frown, cautiously approached the mantel-shelf and watched Bridget as she turned on the gas, drew a match and applied it to the burner. The flame flashed far up and roared, until Bridget turned it down to moderate dimensions.

For one instant Nancy stared, with her mouth and eyes wide open, and with horror depicted in every lineament of her face. And then she threw up her hands and rushed shrieking into the parlor.

"What in the name of wonder is the matter, Nancy?" exclaimed Owen, throwing down his pen and starting up from a table where he had been writing.

"Oh, Marse Owen! the devil's own works!"

"What is it? speak!" cried Owen, in alarm.

"Oh, Marse Owen, a little iron man, with a sarpint in his hand, with flames coming out of his mouth! And that Shore gal it was who set it a-fire!"

"Are you demented?" demanded Owen, striding into the kitchen to see what really could be the trouble.

"What is all this, Bridget?" he asked.

"If you please, sir, she was frightened of the gas. Sure she never saw any before."

"Nancy!" called Owen, going to the door.

The old woman came in quaking.

"Was *this* what frightened you?" he asked, pointing to the burner.

"*Look at it!*" was all that Nancy could reply, and in a tone of the most intense consternation.

"You goose of an old Nancy, come here and let me explain it to you," said Owen.

But it took more words than I have time or space to transcribe to teach Nancy the history and properties of gas as an illuminator

She was at last, however, brought to acknowledge that it might be safe and it might be useful. But she would never agree that it could be any other than the "devil's works."

"Now come with me, Nancy, and I will show you the gas-burners in the parlor," said Owen, leading the way thither.

The gas-burners in the parlor formed a pretty little chandelier that hung from the ceiling over the centre-table. And each burner was in the form of a tulip. Owen lighted one of them.

Nancy gazed no longer in consternation, it is true, but in strong disapprobation.

"Now, Nancy, do you think you will know how to light it?"

"No, Marse Owen. And I don't want to know nyther. I don't want to have nothing 't all to do with it. It's the devil's works. Flames of fire coming out'n the mouths of wenemous sarpints in the kitchen. Flames of fire coming out'n the cups of innocent flowers in the parlor. I won't have nothing to do with no sich. It's the devil's works."

Owen laughed and replied:

"Well, Nancy, I will myself attend to the gas down here; and perhaps it is safest that I should. And I can tell you for your comfort that there is no gas in the chambers up-stairs."

"And I am very glad to hear it. I wouldn't sleep in the same room with sich—no, not for the President's salary!" said the old woman as she returned to the kitchen.

Bridget had gone; but Nancy found no difficulty in preparing the tea-table. And when it was ready she called the girls in from the garden, where they had been rambling.

Such a phenomenon as fire coming from an iron serpent's

crested head could not escape their sharp eyes, though they gazed upon the miracle in curiosity rather than fear. So once more Owen had to explain the nature and uses of gas.

The girls had heard of it and read of it, and were, therefore, less prejudiced against it than Nancy had been.

After tea the little family, tired with the day's excitement, separated and retired to rest.

Very early in the morning, however, the girls arose and dressed, and came down to look around their new home by daylight.

Owen was already in the parlor. And Nancy had the breakfast-table set in the kitchen. When it was quite ready she called them in.

While at breakfast, Lily Gay said:

"You are going to stay home with us to-day, Owen?"

"No, darling, I must go to town."

"I thought you were not to begin at your new place of business until Monday."

"Neither am I, dear. But I must go to town for all that."

"But why?"

"To do something, darling, that I ought to have done long before this."

"And what is that, Owen?"

"You inquisitive little witch, why do you wish to know?"

"Because I am the mistress of the house, and have the right to know."

"Well, then, if I must tell you, I am going to insure my life."

"To do—*which*?" demanded Nancy, sharply, setting down the plate of bread that she held in her hand, and staring at Owen.

"To insure my life, Nancy, for the benefit of my sisters. I hope there can be no objection to that?"

"To insure your life! To take Marster's will right

out'n His holy hands into your unreverent ones! Why, you young riporate, if Marster wills to take your life, how you dare to say as you'll insure it? Well, Lord! what next, I *would* like to know? Here I'm not hardly got over the turn give me by the fiery-mouthed sarpints afore I'm called to hear of poor mortal flesh insuring of its feeble life in defiance of Marster's will. It's downright blasphebus!"

"Oh, Nancy, Nancy, how fatally you seize the wrong end of every idea!" said Owen, who then condescended to explain that it was not the life, but a sum of money, in case of his death, that he wanted insured to his sisters.

"Well, then, why couldn't you say it was your money instead of saying it was your life? If people would talk sense, sensible people would understand them," growled Nancy.

It would be tedious to relate the many ways in which the ideas, manners and customs of city life shocked Nancy's country prejudices.

Scarcely a day passed in which some new discovery, inevitably grasped, as Owen said, by the wrong end, offended Nancy. But by degrees she became accustomed to her new sphere and reconciled to it and even happy in it.

Before this desirable result ensued, however, several little incidents happened that require to be noticed.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

"WE ARE LILIES."

They grew in beauty side by side,
They filled one home with glee,
And reverently each eventide,
In prayer they bent the knee.—*F. D.*

On the next day after that upon which he insured his life, Owen, armed with a letter of introduction from Mr. Campbell, took his sisters to Milton House, the Ladies' School, conducted by the Misses Milton, that had been so highly recommended to him by "the firm." He entered them there as day pupils, with the understanding that they should commence their studies on the ensuing Monday, when the duties of the school would be resumed for the autumn and winter terms.

On Monday, therefore, Lily Gay and Lily May presented themselves at Milton House, and were duly enrolled among the pupils as Miss Gladys Wynne and Miss Mary Wynne. But as they called each other Lily Gay and Lily May, those pretty names obtained the preference among their schoolmates.

"What does it mean?" asked Miss Cora Campbell.

"We are Lilies," answered Lily May, simply.

"They are Lilies," proclaimed Miss Campbell to her companions. And after this the two girls were always called by the schoolmates, when speaking of them, "the Lilies."

On the same day that Lily Gay and Lily May entered Milton House as pupils, Owen entered the establishment of the Messrs. Abell, Brent and Campbell as the youngest partner and "Co." of that prosperous firm.

In October Mr. Spicer came on to lay in his winter stock of goods, and while in the city he made his home with Owen

and his sisters. And when he saw how comfortable and happy they were, he took leave of them in good spirits, promising to visit them again in the spring, and receiving Lily Gay's reiterated promise that she would go to him and be his daughter whenever he should please to let her do so.

In December Mr. William Spicer, junior, came to New York to attend the winter course of lectures at the Medical College. And he lived with Owen and his sisters. Thus peacefully and profitably passed the time, while Owen prospered in his business and the sisters grew towards womanhood.

It is said that all which is needed to make a fortune by commerce is to get hold of the first thousand dollars. I think more and other than that is needed. I think that intellect, will, concentration, is required for success in that calling as in others. All these qualities, as well as his few thousand dollars, Owen carried into the firm of Abell, Brent & Campbell; and they gave a new impetus to the business that mere money, especially so very small a sum, could never have given. Never had the old firm prospered so well as after the engrafting upon it of this young man.

Every winter Mr. William Spicer, junior, came to board with Owen and his sisters and to attend the lectures at the medical college. Every spring and autumn Mr. William Spicer, senior, came to visit them and to purchase his goods.

Besides these sources of social pleasure, they formed agreeable acquaintances in the town. Among them was the minister of the church that they attended, and the minister's family. Owen occasionally corresponded with Mr. James Stukely, who continued to live at Forest Lodge and follow the peddling business. Mr. Stukely adhered to his safe policy of forbearing to "wake sleeping dogs," and therefore he lived untroubled by his "only mother."

And Owen adopted so much of Mr Stukely's policy as to "let well enough alone" and refrain from hunting up the parents of his Lily May. Why indeed should he search

for those who seemed to have proved themselves so utterly indifferent to the fate of their child? *He* loved Lily May with an intensity and disinterestedness that is seldom felt by the sinful heart of man. And he would have deprecated a separation from her as one of the greatest misfortunes that could possibly befall him.

Meanwhile the sisters advanced towards womanhood without a suspicion of the truth that they were not sisters in blood as well as in love.

By diligence in their studies they had in the course of time got in advance of all their school-mates, and with a generous emulation they kept together, "head and head," in the race to scholastic honors.

At sixteen the Lilies were very beautiful; and though of no real kindred, they were very much alike; first in the accidental likeness of complexion and color of the hair and eyes; and secondly, in the certain likeness that will grow between two children who are brought up in close and loving and isolated association. Both had brown hair, dark gray eyes, and complexions so marvellously fair, clear, and pure and transparent, that many thought upon that account alone they were called "the Lilies." The greatest difference between them was this—that Lily Gay was taller and fuller in form, and more stately and assured in manner than Lily May. And this only led to the idea that Lily Gay was the elder sister of the two.

They were always called "the Lilies." They were the pride and the beauties of the school. Indeed, the Misses Milton would rather have lost twice the amount of their annual tuition fees than to have missed the effect they had upon the annual school-exhibition.

They were greatly beloved by their school-mates, that is to say, by the majority of them.

Of course there are envious and malignant spirits everywhere, even among the young girls of a "Ladies' School." And it was not likely that creatures so beautiful, accom-

plished and amiable as "the Lilies" should escape envy and hatred.

This did not trouble the sisters much, however. It takes two parties to make war, and the sisters declined to be one of the parties. Their hearts were to full of affection and goodness and happiness to have any room for evil passions.

But ah! they were destined soon to receive a rude shock, to have their security terribly shaken, and to see their enemies triumph for a season.

The misfortune happened in this way:

In the commencement of the winter term there were two new boarding pupils received into the school.

Now "the Lilies" had always been zealous to extend "the right hand of fellowship" to any young strangers that came among them. But when they heard that these two young ladies—Miss Flint and Miss Kerr—were from Prout's Point, in the immediate neighborhood of their own old home in Maryland, their hearts went out to welcome them with a warmer interest than they had ever felt for any other new-comers. And they longed for the time when the lessons would be over and the recreation hour would afford them the opportunity of making the acquaintance of these Maryland girls.

The two young ladies from Maryland, on their own part, were not the less interested in meeting the beautiful sisters whose school fame had not failed to reach them soon after their arrival. They did not as yet know that "the Lilies" were from their own neighborhood. They had not as yet even seen them, because they, as new-comers, backward in their education, were assigned to a different class-room from that occupied by the sisters.

At the recreation hour, however, the whole school met in the beautiful grounds around the house.

And "the Lilies" immediately sought out the strangers. They saw them at a distance, under the shade of an old

tree, with a few of their school-mates around them. Smiling a welcome, the sisters went up to them. Lily Gay held out her hand, saying:

"You are from Maryland—from Prout's Point—near our own old home. I am so glad! We are from that neighborhood; and we are the only Maryland girls here. I shall be so happy if we become friends."

"And so shall I. I love our old State and all who come from it," said Lily May, with her whole warm heart in the smile she gave them.

"Oh! you are from Maryland? From what part?" inquired Miss Flint.

"From *your* part, or very near it. From Rognes' Harbor. We are the daughters of the late Doctor Wynne, of that village," said Lily Gay, frankly.

"*Oh!*" exclaimed Miss Flint, and she involuntarily shrank back and stared at the sisters.

Something in this gesture, unimportant as it seemed, attracted the attention of other pupils, who gathered around this group of four.

"I hope we will be friends," said Lily May, gently.

"I don't know. Which of you is Doctor Wynne's own daughter?"

"We both are. We are own sisters. Don't you know that we are?" said Lily Gay, smiling at the other's supposed ignorance.

"How can you say that? *I* know all about Doctor Wynne and his story! 'Twasn't a story likely to be hushed up, I tell you! And I have heard it over and over since I was so high!" said Miss Flint, indicating the average height of a child of five years of age.

"I don't know what you are talking about," said Lily Gay, still smiling.

"I am talking about——But first tell me which of you two is Doctor Wynne's own daughter, for with her only

will I converse. I can hold no intercourse with the other one!"

The sisters gazed on each other, and then on the strangers. At length Lily Gay spoke again:

"You are laboring under some very strange delusion. We are both the daughters of Doctor Wynne."

Here Miss Kerr, who had not as yet spoken, touched her companion, and whispered, in an audible voice:

"The taller one—the one you were talking with—is Miss Wynne. I knew them all well by sight. I used to attend the same church."

"*You* are Miss Wynne, then; and I should be happy to make your acquaintance, if I could do so without being mixed up with the other young person. But I cannot, I really cannot, indeed, have any thing to do with *her!* I never in my life *did* associate with such people, and never will!" said Miss Flint, haughtily.

"*Oh!* Lily Gay, *what* does she mean? *What* have I done?" said Lily May, in an imploring voice, as she clasped her hands and lifted her pale face and tearful eyes to her sister.

"You have done nothing, my own pet. And I will soon make her tell what she means. What *do* you mean, Miss Flint? I demand an explanation instantly," said Lily Gay, clasping her insulted sister to her bosom, while she confronted her assailer.

"Oh, I will give you the explanation willingly enough, since you have the effrontery to ask it. I have no ill-will against either of you," said the young lady, haughtily, yet with all honesty; "but I do not like to associate with certain sorts of people; and I do not like imposition and false shows; and if you *would* come to this distant part of the country to palm off that girl as your sister, and I have had the misfortune to come here and find you out, the fault is yours and not mine."

Lily Gay stamped.

"Be plain!" she said.

"Oh, I will be plain enough, if that is what you want!" said Miss Flint. Then turning towards a crowd of school-girls that surrounded them with eager eyes and attentive ears, she said:

"Young ladies, that girl, whom Miss Wynne holds to her bosom, is not Dr. Wynne's daughter. She is—— something that is not fit for my lips to speak or your ears to hear. Her parents, her real parents, are ashamed to own her! She was cast, a new-born babe, on Doctor Wynne's charity; and she was brought up by his wife! There! that is the truth of it! All Rogues' Harbor and the country round about know it to be the truth! I am sorry for the poor girl, but really she ought not to have been imposed on a respectable school as a respectable girl!"

"Cora Campbell! hold Lily May for me!" said Lily Gay, laying her fainting sister on the bosom of her friend.

And then, pale with concentrated passion, she wheeled around and soundly boxed the ears of Miss Flint a half a dozen times before any one thought of interfering to prevent her. Perhaps in no case would any one have done so; for "Served her right," was the irrepressible murmur of the school-girls.

And I hope the reader will remember that Queen Elizabeth once boxed the ears of the Marchioness of Nottingham, and forgive Lily Gay if the savage that is latent in every human heart on this one occasion burst the bounds of education and civilization.

Leaving her enemy stunned as much by astonishment as by the blows, Lily Gay led her drooping sister out from among their companions, and took her home.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

PERFECT LOVE.

Imagine something purer far,
More free from stain of clay
Than friendship, love and passion are,
Yet human still as they,
And if thy lips for love like this
No mortal word can frame,
Go ask of angels what it is,
And call it by that name.—*Moore.*

REACHING the little parlor, Lily May threw off her bonnet and mantle, sunk upon the sofa and buried her head in its pillows, murmuring as she did so:

"Lily Gay! don't let Owen know. It would grieve him so."

But at that very moment Owen entered the room.

Seeing Lily May sobbing on the sofa, he turned in alarm and almost in anger to his sister.

"What have you been doing to her?" he demanded.

"I! nothing! But I have given Miss Flint a beating!" exclaimed Lily Gay. And then, in indignant excitement, she poured forth the story of the insult that had been offered Lily May.

Nancy entered from the kitchen and heard the whole. And her face was a curiosity in its honest wrath!

"I wish I had been there! I wouldn't a-boxed her years! I would a-spanked her! good too! the minx."

"Be silent, Nancy!" said Owen, as he went and knelt beside the prostrate form of Lily May. A broken lily she seemed indeed, as she lay there, pale, faint, and drooping.

"Oh, Owen," she whispered, "is it true?"

Owen hesitated.

"Is it true, Owen?" repeated Lily May, in a voice of anguish.

Still Owen hesitated.

"Of course it is not true! How *can* you feel a doubt about it?" indignantly exclaimed Lily Gay.

Owen did not speak.

"Oh, Owen, answer, *is* it true?" reiterated Lily May, clasping her hands, and gazing imploringly into the face of the young man.

Owen bent over her, laid his hands caressingly upon her brown curls, and murmured tenderly:

"Darling, it is true."

With a gasping cry, she threw her hands up to her face and burst into a fit of passionate sobs and tears.

"Oh, Owen! What have you said? You did not mean it! It is not so!" cried Lily Gay, in amazement.

"Yes, dear, it is so," softly replied Owen.

"Oh, I must get away from this! I cannot a-bear it!" exclaimed Nancy, abruptly leaving the parlor.

"Owen, I *cannot* believe it! How *can* it be so?" cried Lily Gay, wringing her hands in distress.

"Hush, my dear, I will tell you all about it by-and-by. I must look to *her* now," said Owen, softly, kneeling beside Lily May and bending over her.

She was still sobbing as though her heart would break.

"Dearest Lily May, there is nothing in this that should distress you. *I* say so; and you know I never speak falsely," murmured Owen, gently.

But Owen's kind words seemed only to augment her grief. She wept and sobbed more convulsively than ever.

"Oh, Lily May, don't grieve so, pet—please don't! Even if it is so, which I can scarcely believe, though Owen says it, it can make no difference in our loves, you know," said Lily Gay, bending over the other side of her adopted sister.

But still a tempest of sobs shook the frame of Lily May.

"It makes *no* difference, Lily May! How can it? *I* love you as much as if you were my own twin-sister and my only

one. Oh! don't grieve so, or you will half kill me!" pleaded Lily Gay.

Still sobbing, Lily May lifted her hands from her pale and tear-stained face, and put them around her sister's neck, and drew her head down upon her bosom and held it there.

And then Lily Gay's courage gave way, and clasping her sister tightly, she too wept aloud.

Leaving them sobbing in each other's arms, Owen arose and thoughtfully paced up and down the room—paced until their tempest of sobs and tears had subsided and his sister was saying to her friend:

"I love you, Lily May! I love you as well as if you were my own only sister. And Owen loves you better still! better than if you were really his sister. Better, much better than he loves me. Everybody knows that, Lily May!"

"But—to be of no kin to you at all! to be *nothing* to you!—you whom I always thought to be my own dear brother and sister! It confuses my mind! It—almost brea—breaks my heart!" sobbed the poor girl.

"But you are all the world to us, Lily May! We both love you, darling, more than we love ourselves!—Owen, come and say something to her! She will listen to you," said Lily Gay, rising with a sigh to give place to her brother.

Owen approached and knelt beside the sofa, and placed his hand soothingly upon Lily May's brown curls. But she gazed wildly, fondly, passionately into his face; and then, impulsively springing up, she threw herself into his arms, clasped her hand around his neck, dropped her face upon his bosom, and wept forth the words:

"Not my own dear brother! not any thing to me! Oh, Owen! it is not true. It *cannot* be true! It is too unnatural and too dreadful to be borne! It would make me feel as if all support was taken from me and I was sunk into

nothing! Oh, yes! as if the very earth had crumbled under my feet and left me lost in space. Oh! I could not bear it. It would drive me crazy! It would break my heart! Oh, Owen, speak to me! comfort me! tell me it was all a mistake! that I have been dreaming! Tell me that you *are* my brother, as you always were! that I *am* your little sister! your Lily May! with the right to love you and live with you forever!"

To these fervent, earnest, impassioned words Owen made no reply, save by pressing a kiss upon her brow, until he had turned his head and signed for Lily Gay to leave the room.

No third party, however near and dear, must listen to the words he had to whisper to Lily May.

So, when they were alone, he seated her gently back in the corner of the sofa, and kneeling by her side, as though he could not show too much honor to this nameless and homeless girl—nameless and homeless but for him—he bent over her and murmured:

"Heart of my heart, you *are* my own Lily May, with the right to love me and live with me forever and ever, in this world and in the next, if Heaven wills."

"Then, after all, I *am* your sister, Owen," she said, smiling through her tears like a sun-burst through the rain. "But oh! I am so bewildered and perplexed by all that I have heard, that I do not know what to think or to say. But I *am* your sister, Owen dear! Please say that again; for I do still feel nervous and frightened, lest after all there should be some truth in what that young lady said. But I *am* your sister, am I not, Owen? Yes, I know I am. But tell me so with your own lips, and then I shall not mind all the hard things Miss Flint said to me. Come—tell me again I *am* your sister, Owen!" she said, in a half asserting, half questioning, and wholly imploring manner.

"No, heart of my heart! thank heaven that you are not my sister!" answered Owen, earnestly, and even solemnly.

Lily May raised her head, and gazed on him in silent amazement.

Owen smiled with a heavenly happiness upon her perplexity.

"Why, you just now said that I *was;* that I was your own Lily May, with the right to love you and live with you forever!"

"So I did! and so you are, all that! And yet, thank Heaven, you are not my sister!" said Owen, still smiling in holy joy.

"Oh, Owen! you look happy and loving, even while saying these strange things to me. What do you mean?" she said.

"Heart of my heart—yes, dearest, that is what you are to me—innermost heart of my heart! You are far dearer to me than any sister ever could be to a brother. You are dearer to me than all the world besides!"

"Not than Lily Gay; that would not be just, you know; *she* at least *is* your own sister."

"Yes, and I love her as few brothers love their sisters; and she knows it! But I love you with a deeper, stronger and tenderer love; and she knows that, too. But she is not jealous of you, dearest. Lily Gay loves me; but she will probably live to love some one more than she loves me, and in the course of nature and Providence she will marry and leave me. But my Lily May will never leave me! And now, does it still grieve you that we are of no kin to each other? And are you still amazed that I thank Heaven we are not?" said Owen, with all his loving heart in his looks and his voice.

"I should not mind—so very much—not being really your sister, if I could have a sister's right to stay with you always," murmured Lily May.

"Heart of my heart! You shall have more than my sister's right! You look at me in wonder, darling. Never mind. You must trust me. You are so young, darling—

such a mere, simple child—that it would be premature and wrong to speak to you more plainly now. You must trust me and be at peace," he said, stooping and pressing a kiss upon her brow. And never in any other manner had Owen kissed Lily May since she was a little child. A chivalric reverence for her growing womanhood, her helplessness and her dependence, had made her sacred as a queen to him.

"I will trust you, Owen. I will trust you through life and unto death. But since I am not your sister in fact, though I am in affection, you will some day tell me who I am, and how I came into your possession?"

"Yes, my darling; I will tell you all I know and all I suspect, as soon as you are calm enough to hear the story. For I will have no secrets from my Lily May."

"Will you tell me to-night, Owen, after tea?"

"Yes, dearest, I will."

At this moment there was a ring at the hall-door bell. And Nancy was heard to go and answer it. And presently she opened the parlor-door and said:

"If you please, sir, Miss Milton has called, and wishes to see you privately on business."

"Very well. Show Miss Milton in here. Lily May, my dearest, go to your sister."

"*Sister!*" echoed Lily May, in mournful irony.

"Yes, sister! as she is and shall be! You can never be *my* sister, Lily May; but you can and shall be hers! Go now, darling. You will not like to meet this lady."

"Oh, no! no!" said Lily May, starting up and making a hasty retreat into the kitchen, and thence up the back-stairs to the chamber jointly occupied by herself and Lily Gay.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

LILY MAY'S WOE.

A lie, that is half a truth,
Is ever the blackest of lies,
A lie, that is all a lie,
May be met and fought with outright,
But a lie that is half a truth
Is a harder matter to fight.—*Tennyson.*

Lily May had scarcely made her escape from the room when Nancy ushered in Miss Milton, a stately maiden lady, aged about fifty years, and attired in a stout, gray silk dress, mantle and bonnet.

Owen stood up, bowed and placed a chair for his visitor.

With the self-possession characteristic of the head mistress of a Ladies' School, Miss Milton took the offered seat and at once opened her business.

"I am here upon a very delicate matter, that I scarcely know how to explain without both feeling and giving pain," she said.

"You may then spare yourself and me, Miss Milton. My sister has already informed me of the circumstance to which you allude," said Owen.

"Ah! then that relieves me of some portion of my unpleasant duty. And I have only to say, that as you are in possession of all the facts, you will probably see the prudence of withdrawing the young lady from the school."

"You mean my sister. I cannot but express my regret that she should not have had sufficient self-control to resent in some more dignified and womanly manner the insult offered to Lily May. But you will admit, madam, that the provocation was very great. And that there are moments in the lives of the best-trained men and women when Nature surprises and overcomes Education. It was thus in my

sister's case. Of course, I shall withdraw her from the school. After what has occurred, she can have no desire to return."

"But you mistake, sir. It is not of Miss Wynne that I speak. Of course, her conduct was unlady-like; but the conduct of young ladies very frequently is so. Her treatment of Miss Flint was impulsive and not inexcusable. There were faults on both sides. But a little mutual concession will set that matter right. I can easily effect a reconciliation between Miss Wynne and Miss Flint. It is not Miss Wynne, but Miss Mary, whom I would advise you to remove from the school."

"Lily May! Excuse me, madam, if I really cannot see in what Lily May has been to blame. It appears to me, from what I have heard, that her whole conduct throughout that trying scene has been most gentle, womanly, and forbearing. I cannot see what charge can be brought against Lily May. Though, certainly, when Gay leaves, she also will do so; for they are inseparable. But, pray tell me, madam, in what respect you suppose May to have been in fault."

"In no respect, whatever. In herself she is certainly a very lovely and estimable young person. But in her circumstances she is unfortunate. And after the exposure of this afternoon, it would be neither prudent in us, nor pleasant for her, that she should remain in the school. If you knew the nature of young ladies as well as I do, who have had the teaching of them for nearly half a century, you would understand that they would make this poor girl's position among them intolerable, and would involve us in perpetual embarrassments. It is therefore for *her* sake as well as for our own that we advise her withdrawal."

"She will not return; be sure of that, Miss Milton."

"We shall be really sorry to lose her. We will hope, however, to see Miss Wynne again. We shall be happy to continue to direct her studies."

"Thank you; but my sister will not return," said Owen, coldly.

"Then you withdraw them both?"

"Certainly; they are inseparable."

"I am sorry for that. But, as your withdrawal of Miss Wynne is entirely voluntary on your part, and very much against our wishes, we cannot undertake to refund the money paid in advance for the scholastic term just commenced."

"It will not be required, madam."

"But in the case of Miss Mary, who is removed at our own suggestion, we are willing to refund."

"It is not at all necessary."

"Yes, sir; but in common justice——"

"In common justice you may retain the whole of the fees, madam; because, before your visit, I had quite resolved to withdraw both the young ladies at once; and, by so doing, of course to forfeit the fees already paid."

"Ah, that changes the whole face of affairs," said the school-mistress, rising.

Owen arose also, and bowed.

"I believe, then, that our interview is at an end. Good-afternoon, Mr. Wynne."

"Good-afternoon, madam," said Owen, politely opening the door and holding it open for her exit.

Meanwhile, Lily May had run up into the chamber immediately over the parlor, that was jointly occupied by herself and her sister.

On entering the room she threw herself into Lily Gay's arms, and burst into a fresh passion of tears.

Lily Gay, partly borne down by her weight, drew her down upon the carpet, and, clasping her lovingly, began to caress her and to expostulate with her.

"Now, it is of no use for you to take this so much to heart, for there is no good cause to grieve. You haven't lost any thing; and you are not going to lose any thing.

Dear me, nothing is changed from what it used to be with us. Our state is just what it was. We are all in the same relative position that we were before. A little secret, that Owen knew before, has come to your knowledge and mine —that is all. As for myself—in the first place, I can't *believe* it. In the second place, I can't *realize* it. And in the third place, *I don't care* any thing about it. I know that we are as dear to each other as we possibly can be."

"But, oh! Lily Gay, if I am not your sister, *Who am I? What am I?* Miss Flint said something to the effect that there was sin and shame in the secret of my parentage. She said—oh, how her words *burn* in my heart!—she said that I was something that it was not fit for her lips to speak or the young ladies' ears to hear. Oh, Lily Gay, *what* did she mean? *What* am I that it would soil a lady's lips to speak or ears to hear?" pleaded the poor girl, clasping her hands and looking imploringly into her sister's face.

"You are the darling of our hearts and eyes, the angel of our house and lives! What that insolent girl means, I do not know, and do not wish to know," replied Lily Gay, caressing her sister.

"Owen promised to tell me to-night all that he knows about me," said Lily May.

"Then it will be something that will contain no word that a saint might not utter or an angel hear," said Lily Gay, earnestly.

"I know it," assented the other.

Half an hour longer was passed in sisterly communion, and then Lily Gay arose and began to change her dress for the evening; for these little refinements of domestic life were always observed by "the lilies."

While Lily Gay was changing her gray gingham school-dress for the fresh white swiss muslin of her evening toilet, Lily May, restless and unhappy, wandered down into the kitchen.

Nancy was there, preparing muffins for tea. No one was with her.

"Nancy," said the grieving girl, seating herself at the side-table, where the old woman was buttering the muffins, "Nancy, you heard what Lily Gay told Owen that Miss Flint said of me, did you not?"

"Yes, but who the mischief care what she say?—poor white trash herself, I know she is!" replied the old woman, pressing the butter-knife so hard upon the muffins that she pressed it through to the plate.

"Nancy, did *you* know I wasn't Owen's sister?"

"In course I did! What now?"

"If I am not Owen's sister, who am I, and what am I?"

"You're what the Lord made you, honey, and no more nor less! And that is enough for you to know."

"Nancy! Miss Flint said that I was something not fit for her lips to speak or the young ladies' ears to hear. What did she mean that I was, Nancy?"

"How I know?" replied the old woman, curtly.

"You *do* know, Nancy. I see that you do. Oh, tell me, Nancy!" persisted Lily May, clasping her hands in the earnestness of her entreaty.

"Hi! how I gwine tell you? 'Spose I done read her wicked thoughts?"

"You can tell me, Nancy. I am sure that you can!" pleaded Lily May.

"Well, I won't then! there!"

"Please, Nancy!"

"Tell you, I won't!"

"Please, Nancy!"

"Laws-a-messy upon me, how persevering you are, to be sure!"

"Please, Nancy!"

"Saying the same thing over and over again, so tiresome! —What you want me to tell you for?"

"That I may know the worst at once!"

"Well, then, I ralely do 'spose if I don't tell you, you'll imaginate it a deal worse nor it was! So if you must know, she meant just this——"

"What, Nancy?"

"Why, as you is the child of parients as never was married."

Ah! what a blow! In an instant the blood rushed over the face of Lily May, crimsoning it from forehead to throat, and then receding, left it pale as death. With a sudden cry like one who had received a sharp wound, she threw her hands before her face and fell back in her chair.

"Now there! Now there! So much for 'dulging of you in your whim. But you would have it. And now see!" exclaimed Nancy, gazing in dismay upon the effects of her brief explanation.

Lily May gave no answer, made no motion, but sat stony still and deathly silent.

"Now don't take on so! now don't, my precious! It is not your fault; you are not to blame; and no one thinks the worse of you if your mother *did*——"

"Oh, don't! don't!" gasped the stricken girl in an agony of entreaty, as she turned away her head and extended her hands as if to ward off a dreaded blow. "Not another word! in mercy! in mercy!"

Appalled by the dread woe on the brow of one so young and innocent, Nancy did not attempt to utter another syllable; but sat down and mentally groaned over the effects of her own communication.

After a little while Lily May tottered to her feet, stood for a moment looking dizzy and bewildered, and then, with her chin dropped upon her breast, and one hand pressed upon her brow, and the other extended like that of a blind girl groping her way, she crept from the kitchen and up the back-stairs, and so through to the one spare room, where she knew she would be sure of solitude. And there she sunk down upon the floor, with her face buried in her arms, in a collapse of despair, too deep for tears, sighs or groans.

Do you wonder at her?

Very little knowledge of the evil that is in this world had penetrated the pure home that sheltered "the Lilies." Some, of course, inevitably had. Lily May had, indeed, vaguely heard that there was a class of wretched women, who haunted the streets and led lives of mysterious sin, and died in hospitals, gutters, or prisons. And whenever the thought of these darkened and chilled her mind and heart, she shrunk shuddering away from it in utter horror and hopeless pity, such as one might feel for the doomed and lost souls in hell. But between these miserable creatures and the good women who ministered in sacred homes, she guessed no intermediate class. And now in being told that she was the child of parents who had never been married, she seemed to hear her mother and herself consigned to the deepest depths of infamy.

And so she lay, crushed, prostrate, despairing, without a single ray of hope.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

LILY MAY'S WALK.

Where the haters meet
In the crowded city's horrible street.—*Browning.*

MEANWHILE the tea-table was neatly arranged in the pleasant cottage parlor. And Lily Gay, looking fresh and pretty in her soft white muslin dress and blue ribbons, came down-stairs and passed into the garden to gather the flowers, with which she always adorned the table. Tea-roses, clove-pinks, cape-jessamines, verbena, mignionette and heartsease lent their beauty and fragrance to decorate and cheer the evening meal.

When she had placed her flowers on the centre of the table, she rang the bell and directed Nancy to bring in the tea.

"But where is Lily May?" inquired Owen.

"I suppose she is up-stairs, changing her dress. I dare say she will be down in a few minutes," said Lily Gay.

But when Nancy had brought in the tea, the muffins and the cakes, and Lily Gay had seated herself behind the urn, Owen placed his hands on the back of his own chair and said:

"Go and look for her, dear. I shall not sit down until she comes."

Very willingly Lily Gay sprang up from her seat, and went in search of her foster sister. First she went into their own chamber, where she fully expected to see Lily May, standing before the dressing-glass, putting the last touches to her toilet. But not seeing her there, she went down-stairs, into the kitchen, and into the garden. Failing to find her there, she returned up-stairs and sought her in Owen's apartment, in Nancy's chamber, and at last in the spare room, where she found Lily May, lying prostrate, with her arms thrown beyond her head, and her face prone on the carpet.

Thinking she had fainted and fallen there, Lily Gay, with a cry of distress, ran to her, raised her head, and gazed terror-stricken into her pale, despairing but tearless face.

Seeing then that she was conscious, Lily Gay exclaimed:

"Darling! what is the matter? Oh, is it this discovery that has produced such an effect upon you?"

"Yes, yes," moaned Lily May.

"But why should it? How sensitive you are, pet! There, don't mind it! Get up and come into our room and let me help you to dress for tea. It is waiting."

"No, no;" wailed Lily May.

"But Owen says he will not sit down without you. Come, dear!—*for Owen's sake!*"

Thus entreated, Lily May, with a tearless sob, permitted her sister to raise her up and lead her into her own room, and sit her down in a chair. In the same spirit of docility, she let her sister sponge her head and face with cold water and comb and curl her hair, and change her dress.

"And now come down, darling, and try to be cheerful—*for Owen's sake!*" said Lily Gay.

No stronger adjunction than "for Owen's sake" could have been addressed to Lily May.

She arose, and permitted her sister to straighten the folds of her white muslin dress, and place a lily in her hair, and lead her down to tea. As she entered the parlor her beautiful face was as white as the lily that decked her bright hair, and the lawn that floated around her graceful form.

Owen met her at the door, touched her forehead with his lips, and led her to a seat at the table, saying:

"Dear Lily May, grieve no more over this revelation. When you hear all I have to tell you, you will see how little reason you have to distress yourself."

As he spoke, she looked up and faintly smiled, for at his words a ray of hope shone into her mind. She made an effort to drink the tea which Lily Gay had poured out for her in the prettiest tea-cup, and to eat the inside slice of the muffin that Owen had laid upon her plate. And though she did not succeed with that, she did succeed in preserving her calmness until the meal was over.

When the service was cleared away, Owen led her to the sofa and seated her there. And then he placed himself on one side of her and beckoned Lily Gay to sit on the other side.

And thus, sitting safely between her adopted brother and sister, with her hands each clasped in a hand of theirs, Lily May heard as much of the story of her birth as Owen could impart to her. And that was very little.

At first Lily May listened eagerly and hopefully, in the expectation of hearing something that should set her

morbid doubts and fears at rest, and soothe her wounded pride and delicacy. But as the narrative drew to a close, without affording her the assurance she so intensely desired, her spirit sank, and her face settled into the stony stillness of despair.

She remembered the cruel words of Miss Flint, that she, Lily May, was something that was not fit for a young lady's lips to speak, or ears to hear. And the reluctant explanation wrung from Nancy that *this* meant that she was the child of parents who had never been married. She supposed that her father and her mother had cast her off even in her helpless infancy as a reproach and dishonor to them. And that Owen's mother had taken her in, and Owen and his sister had borne all the shame and degradation that her presence brought in its train.

She recalled to mind the insults that had been heaped upon her at the school, and under which Lily Gay and Owen, as well as herself, had suffered.

And she said in her heart:

"It is not just that they should suffer for my sake what even my own father and mother would not endure for me. I am something so low that a lady's lips may not utter or a lady's ears hear what I am! I am a forsaken child of sin, a dishonor to the parents who have cast me off, and a degradation to the dear friends who have taken me in. And yet heaven knows I am innocent. And by the Lord's blessing I will keep innocency! And to keep innocency, I must not be a party to this great injustice that is done my beloved ones, by thrusting upon them a shame and embarrassment which is none of theirs. No! I must steal away from them and die!"

All this was very morbid, of course. But just remember how inexperienced, how delicate, and how sensitive was this girl; and how insulted, shocked and wounded she had been.

While these thoughts and resolutions were passing

through her mind, she was listening patiently and gratefully to the words of love and comfort that were being poured into her ears by Owen and Lily Gay.

At length, when their usual hour for retirement had come and passed, Lily Gay arose to break up the group.

Lily May was slower. Rising with reluctance, she bent her head to Owen's lips, saying:

"Good-night, Owen. Good-night, dear Owen. Whatever should become of me, in life and in death, my first thought and my last will be you."

He drew her down and pressed his lips to her brow. And she seized his hands and covered them with kisses. And the stony stillness that had bound her features broke up and melted into a shower of tears that fell like rain upon the hands she was caressing. At length she dropped them and turned and left the room, followed by Lily Gay.

As they passed Nancy's little room, Lily May peeped in to see if the old woman was there. And seeing her, she went in and said:

"I have come to bid you good-night, Nancy dear."

"Hi, child, what make you do that?" inquired the old woman, in surprise.

"I feel like doing it, Nancy dear."

"How saft your heart is to-night, to be sure. Well, good-night. And may the Father in Heaven preserve you, my baby!" said the old woman, tenderly.

"Oh, Nancy! thank you! thank you for that! Indeed I need blessing," said Lily May, as she turned from the room.

When the girls had reached their own chamber, Lily Gay went at once to the dressing-table and began to take off her collar, ribbons and other light articles of apparel

Lily May lighted a gas-burner at the corner of the mantelpiece, and sat down to her writing-desk, which stood immediately under it.

Lily Gay turned around and looked at her; but was not

surprised at this, as Lily May had lately taken to writing stories, essays and poetry, and frequently devoted an hour or two to such literary compositions before retiring.

"Are you going to write this evening, Lily May?" she asked.

"Yes, dear."

"Will you write long?"

"I do not know."

"Is it your story or your poem, which?"

"It is my story."

"Oh, well, I suppose you will write until the lovers are married."

"Not quite so long as that."

"I am glad of that. For I want to hug you up and comfort you," said Lily Gay. And she made haste, undressed herself, said her private prayers and went to bed; but not to sleep.

With the cover drawn up lightly under her chin, and her eyes wide open, she lay there and watched Lily May, who sat at her desk writing, meditating, and then writing again. She watched her a full hour.

And then the little fancy clock on the chimney-piece struck eleven.

And she heard Owen come up-stairs and go into his room.

Lily May heard him also; for she dropped her pen and listened until all was silent in his chamber. Then she resumed her task.

"Lily May, darling, when are you coming to bed?" asked Lily Gay.

"Why, are you not asleep yet?" inquired Lily May.

"No, nor I don't mean to go to sleep until you come to bed. So please to take that into consideration and reflect that it is not only your own health that you are ruining by late hours, but mine also."

"I shall not be long now," said Lily May, going on with her writing.

And Lily Gay, with the cover clutched tightly under her chin, lay and watched the writer, with eyes that grew bigger and wilder every instant. She watched her still another hour; and then the little clock struck twelve.

"Lily May, *do* come to bed!" she pleaded.

"I am coming now, dear. I have just done," said the midnight toiler.

And Lily May put what she had written into her desk, and then got up and quickly undressed and said her prayers and went to bed.

Some instinct that she herself could not have explained led Lily Gay to clasp her arms tightly around the waist of Lily May, and hold her so until she (Lily Gay) went to sleep. And this was not until the clock struck one.

Then Lily May, whose weary eyes had not closed for an instant, tried gently to unclasp the arm of her companion and free herself from their embrace.

But on the first motion, Lily Gay, without waking, started nervously and tightened her hold like a vice.

Very patiently Lily May composed herself and waited until her bed-fellow seemed in a deep sleep. Then once again she tried to free herself; but with no better success; for Lily Gay tightened her clasp and clasped her like a fetter.

Lily May lay patiently, making at intervals fruitless attempts to free herself, until near day, when at length Lily Gay sank from slumber into the deep and dreamless sleep that is only the result of a long night-watch or great fatigue.

Then very gently Lily May loosened her companion's clasp and very cautiously she slipped from their embrace and got out of bed. Tipping in her stocking feet, she crossed the room, raised the gas, opened her writing-desk, took from it the manuscript she had been engaged upon that night, and which proved to be a letter,—folded, enveloped, sealed and directed it, and then put it in the pocket of her gray gingham dress. Then she lowered the gas again and tipped about the room in her stocking feet,

gathering together a few necessary articles of apparel and packing them, with comb, brush, soap and napkin, into a leather hand-bag.

Then she dressed herself in the gray gingham dress, and black silk mantle, and straw bonnet. Then she went and gazed long and fixedly on Lily Gay, and stooped and pressed the lightest kiss upon her cheek.

Then she took up her bag and passed softly from the room. At the door of Owen's chamber she stooped and knelt down for a moment; and the tears that had been frozen in their sockets for so many hours broke forth, and she wept abundantly, though silently.

"You will grieve for me—I know you will! But I cannot stop for that. It is better that you should grieve for me than blush for me!" she murmured, as she arose and hurried down stairs.

She went softly into the parlor, opened a little writing-desk that was common to the use of Owen, Lily Gay and herself, and put the letter she had prepared into it.

Finally she opened the front door and passed out.

On the porch she stopped an instant, clasped her hands in an agony of parting grief, then murmured:

"It is for their honor, if not for their peace. I know that honor must never be sacrificed for peace. I know not where I go, nor does it matter, so that I go from here. I know not what will be my fate, nor does that matter either, so that the home of Owen and Lily Gay will be freed from reproach for the presence of one who is something that a lady's lips cannot name, nor a lady's ears hear!'"

Ah! how those cruel words of Julia Flint rankled in her heart!

Repeating them as if to give herself courage for her flight, she opened the little gate, and hurried away without ever looking behind.

She went towards the ferry, with the vague idea that she would cross the river and lose herself in the crowds of

the city. At another time she would have been afraid of being alone in the city; but not now; for now she was only afraid of being followed, and found, and taken back to her home.

Ah! she knew that Owen and Lily Gay would suffer bitter sorrow for her loss; but she reasoned that sorrow was better than shame; and that if she succeeded in keeping away from them, their sorrow would be temporary; whereas, if she returned to them, the shame of her presence would be lasting.

She reasoned from false premises, of course, but without knowing that she did so. In leaving the protection of her best friends, and inflicting on them the most poignant anguish, she was doing very wrong; but she was doing it in the most self-sacrificing spirit of doing right. Delicate, sensitive, and shocked and wounded to the quick, Lily May was scarcely in a condition of mind or body to think or act for herself.

In this mood she reached the ferry.

The sun was just rising as she stepped upon the boat among the crowds that were pouring on to it.

As the boat left the pier she stood like one in a dream looking over the side into the river.

As she looked, the temptation that comes once at least in the life of every unfortunate one, came to her. But she put it away from her.

"No, not that," she murmured. "I will live, no matter what I may suffer, until He who gave me life shall give me the peace of death."

When the boat touched the other pier she went on shore. And still like one in a dream she wandered on unknowing whither she went. If her half-stunned reason ever suggested the question, she answered—that she did not know, and that it did not matter; that when she was tired she would stop; and when worn-out, perhaps she would die.

So she wandered into Broadway, and up its long, busy,

crowded side-walk. She looked up in languid curiosity at the windows, and thought, but vaguely, how safe and happy were all the people behind them, who had homes and relatives who were not ashamed to own them.

All the forenoon she wandered on, traversing nearly the whole length of Broadway, and then straying into one of the newly-opened avenues.

By mid-day, from unusual watching, fasting and walking, she had become much exhausted. Faint and thirsty, she entered a confectioner's shop and asked for a cup of tea. And she sat down at one of the tea-tables in the back shop while it was being prepared for her.

Nature is very good to the innocent young; and in due season, despite of sorrow and terror, gives the desire for food and rest.

When Lily May had drunk one cup of tea, she felt that she could eat a muffin. And she asked for one. It was brought to her, hot and nicely buttered, and accompanied by a second cup of tea.

Lily May lingered over her light luncheon for half an hour, and then rose refreshed and prepared to resume her wanderings. The tea had cleared her head, steadied her nerves, and raised her spirits. In this better state, the thought that she need not perish yet, that she might make her own living, occurred to her.

When she stopped at the counter to pay for what she had had, she asked the woman that was in attendance:

"Do you happen to know of any one who wants a seamstress in the house?"

"Dear, yes. There's a customer of ours, a Mrs. Sparr, who lives near the corner of Third Avenue and Seventy-first street, who was asking me to find one for her the other day. If you're fit for the situation you might get it."

"Thank you, I will try. Please put the name and address down upon a piece of paper, and I will take it and call there."

The shop-woman complied with this request, and Lily May once more prepared to start.

"Is it far from this?" she inquired.

"A good bit—a couple o' mile, I should think."

"Which way ought I to go, please?"

The woman came to the door and pointed out the direction.

It was very intricate; but Lily May tried to understand, and then thanked the woman and resumed her walk.

It was a long time before she found her way from Eighth Avenue, where she had taken her lunch, to Third Avenue, where the lady with whom she was going to seek service lived. One great difficulty with Lily May was the bewildering irregularity of the streets and avenues, and the perpetual turning-up of Broadway where it was least expected. And another difficulty was her excessive delicacy, which prevented her from making inquiries of the street passengers.

So at length it was sunset before Lily May was sure that she was at length on Third Avenue walking in the direction of Seventy-first street. As the sky darkened not only with approaching night but with an impending storm, she grew frightened; though more in the anticipation of the horrible night streets than of the warring elements. She hurried on as fast as her weary limbs would take her.

"Oh, I wonder if the lady will take me; and if she will let me sleep in her house to-night! If she will, I shall be safe! But if she won't, what will become of me?—oh, what will become of me?"

And then she clasped her trembling hands and prayed:

"Oh, Father in Heaven, if I have been wrong, forgive me and set me right. And, oh, protect me from evil, for I have none to look to now but only Thee!—for thy dear Son's sake!"

On and on she went, while it grew darker and darker.

"What street is that?" she at length asked of an old

woman who looked a little like Nancy, and upon that account inspired her with courage.

"Eh, honey, that be Seventy-first street. And thee better make haste or thee'll be caught in the storm."

"Thank Heaven!" exclaimed Lily May, hurrying to the corner, where she saw a respectable-looking policeman, and inquiring:

"Can you tell me in which of these houses Mrs. Henry Sparr lives?"

"Yes, in that white stone house; but there is no one at home now. The family left yesterday in the steamer for Europe, and the house is shut up!" replied the policeman.

Lily May stared in dismay for an instant, and then tottered and caught at the iron railing of a portico for support.

Mistaking her character and condition, and especially the cause of her feeling, the policeman advanced toward her.

Seeing his movement, Lily May was seized with terror that lent a momentary strength to her frame, and she sprang up and away like a fawn, losing herself in the streets.

On and on she went, while darker and darker it grew.

Mutterings of thunder were heard in the air, and drops of rain began to fall. Lily May was now in an open part of the suburbs, and her eyes, accustomed to the darkness, could faintly discern objects. She saw on her right hand a detached villa, standing in its own small lot of shrubberies. It looked dark and empty, as if the people of that house also had gone to Europe, or somewhere, and the house was shut up. But there was a covered portico over the front door that promised shelter. And as the rain was now beginning to fall faster, Lily May, frightened, tired, and withal sleepy, opened the iron gate, and went into the small yard, and up the marble steps to the covered portico She had scarcely sat down when sleep, like an angel's

wing, overshadowed her and soothed her into oblivion and rest.

Sleep on, poor weary dove, for you have found your nest.

The house was not uninhabited, as Lily May had judged; for presently a carriage drew up before the door and a lady and gentleman alighted and hurried in out of the rain. But the first object that met their eyes was Lily May asleep on their threshold.

CHAPTER XL.

NAMELESS AND HOMELESS.

Oh, it was pitiful—
In a whole cityful,
Home she had none!—*Hood.*

"WHY, what is this?" exclaimed the gentleman, bending over the sleeping beauty.

"It is a lost child, I think. Do ring the bell, Arthur dear, and tell Lemuel to bring a light here," said the lady, kneeling down beside the fair sleeper.

The gentleman rang a peal that presently brought a man-servant to the door.

"Fetch a candle here immediately, Lemuel. There appears to be an improper person asleep, or ill, or something worse, upon the porch," said the gentleman.

"Oh, Arthur! 'an improper person!' Why, she is a mere child, with a baby's face! Look at her! She has cried herself to sleep like an infant, and the tear-drops are still hanging on her eyelashes, poor darling!" said the lady, tenderly pushing back the damp brown curls from Lily May's pearly forehead, and gazing attentively at her.

"Ah, Gladys, love, you are a very credulous little woman!

But don't you know, when Satan wished to gain an entrance into Paradise, he took the form of the youngest and fairest angel in Heaven?"

"But look at her, Arthur—*do* look at her; that is all that is necessary to make you change your opinion," said Gladys.

And as Lemuel now appeared with the light, Arthur took it from his hand, and stooped down to take a nearer and a clearer view of the stranger.

The light showed him a slight girlish form, a fair, childish face, brown curls, brown eyebrows and eyelashes, white forehead, delicate nose, pouting lips—the expression that of an infant who had cried itself to sleep, but was sleeping in perfect peace, watched by angels. For the rest the dress, plain and simple as it was, bore testimony that the wearer belonged to a refined class of society.

Meantime the rain poured down, but they were all sheltered from it.

"It is some school-girl who has probably lost her way in the streets of the city, and who has been caught in the storm, and has come in here for shelter and fallen asleep," said Arthur, gazing with growing interest upon the beautiful, pale, tear-sprinkled face of the sleeper.

"How soundly she sleeps! she must have been quite exhausted with fatigue," said Gladys, putting her arms under the light form and attempting to raise it.

"What are you doing, love?" inquired Arthur.

"I am going to take her into the house."

"You cannot. Let Lemuel carry her."

"No, Arthur, no. *You* may carry her if you like; but if you do not like, I will," said Gladys, earnestly.

"Well, well, I will carry her myself," said Arthur, smiling and lifting the light burden of the girl's form as easily as he could have lifted an infant.

"And, Lemuel, you may go to the gate and tell Robert that he needn't put the horses up yet, but to let them stand

and cover them with their water-proofs. They will be wanted in an hour or two," said Gladys. Then turning to her husband, she added:

"You know, dear, we will give this child her supper, and find out where she lives, and send her home safe in the carriage."

"Quite right, love," replied Arthur, as he walked before his wife, and bore the young girl into the lighted drawing-room, and seated her in an easy-chair.

As soon as she was thus placed, Lily May awoke. At first she was dazzled by the brilliant light, and bewildered by the new scene in which she found herself.

Remember that this sleep from which she had just awakened was the first she had had since that revelation which had nearly shaken her reason from its seat. It had been a sleep of perfect oblivion. And the awakening was all confusion. She felt a vague oppression of her spirits, and aching of her heart; an undefined consciousness that some crushing calamity had fallen upon her, revolutionized her life, taken from her home, friends, peace and safety, and left her utterly desolate. But what this calamity was, or when or how it happened, she could not at once recollect. So she leaned back in the chair, closed her eyes to shut out the brilliancy of the light, and shaded them with her hand.

Gladys and Arthur, standing on each side of her chair, watched her in silence.

At length Gladys, bending over her, gently inquired:

"You were caught out in the storm, were you not, my dear?"

"Was I?" faintly inquired the girl, in her turn, as she slowly rubbed her forehead, without opening her eyes.

"Yes. Was not that the reason you came upon the porch?"

The girl did not reply, or open her eyes, but continued slowly to rub her forehead.

"Did you not come on our porch to take shelter from the storm?" repeated Gladys.

"I—don't quite know. I—am trying to think," replied Lily May, hesitatingly.

Gladys and Arthur looked at her, and then at each other, in dismay.

"*Insane!*" murmured Arthur.

"Indeed, I am afraid so," whispered Gladys. "But how came she on our door-step?"

"Left her home, or escaped from some lunatic asylum."

"Poor, poor child!"

While the lady and gentleman thus commented upon their strange guest, Lily May, with her eyes closed against the present scene, dived deeply down into the darkness of her own mind, to explore the past, and discover the nature of that weight which so heavily oppressed her heart. Slowly, slowly came at her call the events of the last thirty-six hours. The last came first: the terrible night-walk through the streets of New York, and how she came to be there; her flight from home, and why she fled; the humiliating secret told her by Nancy, and the open affront put upon her by Miss Flint. All these events came out clearly from the darkness, and Lily May remembered all. She rightly judged now that she had been found sleeping on the threshold where she had taken shelter from the storm, and that she had been brought into the house. Having arrived at this solution of her perplexities, she did not at once open her eyes, but sat shading them with her hand, quite still and silent, as if afraid to move or speak.

"I must question her; I must find out the extent of her mania," whispered Gladys. Then bending over Lily May, she gently inquired:

"My dear, do you know how you came to be found at our door?"

Lily May opened her eyes to look at the speaker, but closed them almost immediately, and frowned, and shaded

her brows with her hand, as if half-blinded by the dazzling light. In truth, the trials of the last few hours had affected her nerves with excessive irritability, so that every sense was morbidly acute and sensitive.

"Lower the gas, dear!—lower, lower still—there—so," said Gladys, while her husband reduced the brilliant illumination to a subdued light.

"Will you look at me now, dear, and tell me how you came upon our threshold? Were you caught out in the storm?" inquired Gladys, taking one of her hands tenderly.

"Yes, yes, madam," answered Lily May, clearly, but slowly, like one trying to collect herself, "I was in the streets—alone and frightened—and overtaken by night and by the rain. And I saw this house—it was dark and I thought it was uninhabited—and so I came under the covered porch for shelter. I was very much fatigued and I fell asleep—very sound asleep, I think—for when I woke up I was confused and couldn't recollect myself. And that was the reason, madam, why I did not at once reply to your question. I hope you will forgive me."

On hearing their guest speak thus collectedly, Gladys and Arthur exchanged looks of congratulation; and both at the same time murmured, in nearly inaudible tones:

"*Not insane!*"

Then Gladys, pressing the hand of her guest, said:

"Your apology was quite uncalled for, my dear. I can understand your perplexity. I am glad you took shelter with us; for after you have rested and have had tea, we can very conveniently send you home, and relieve the anxiety of your friends."

It was touching to see the effect of these kindly-meant words on Lily May.

"*Oh, please, please*——" she said, putting her hands together like a little child at prayer, and turning deadly pale, and raising her eyes imploringly to the face of the speaker.

"Please what, my dear? Don't be afraid! Nothing shall hurt you. Please what?"

"Please don't send me away to-night! Please don't! It isn't that I mind being out in the rain so much! But I am so terrified at the idea of being out in the streets alone at night! Please don't send me away to-night! Let me stay this one night under your roof. I don't mind where it is! in the kitchen, or in the hall, or any place, so it is safe! Only let me stay to-night, this one night! and to-morrow I will go away, and will not trouble you any more."

"Certainly, you shall stay here, if you prefer to do so, my dear; but you must tell me who your friends are, and where they live, so that I may send to them and relieve the anxiety which they must feel on your account. Tell me who they are and where they live, my dear," said Gladys.

But Lily May clasped her hands, lifted her eyes imploringly, deprecatingly, and remained silent.

"Will you not tell me so much, my dear?"

"I have no——" *friends*, Lily May, in her desolation, was about to add; but she remembered what devoted friends were hers, and paused.

"You have no—what, my dear?" questioned Gladys.

"I have no *home*," said Lily May, dropping her face into her hands and weeping.

"No home! Have you, then, been turned from your home, unhappy child?" inquired Gladys, in a tone of sorrowful wonder.

"Oh, no, no, no; no one in the dear home I left would ever have sent me away; no, no matter what shame I may have brought upon them! And they are grieving—they are grie—grieving after me now!" cried Lily May, no longer able to control herself, but bursting into passionate sobs and tears.

"Then you ran away from your home," said Gladys, in a

grave and mournful voice; for the words and actions of Lily May were entirely misunderstood.

Lily May felt the unspoken reproach, and lifted her pale and tearful face, and with a certain meek dignity answered:

"Madam, I am a good girl, and it is because I am so that I have left my home."

"I do not understand that. Explain it, my dear," said Gladys, in a softened tone.

"I cannot! I cannot! Oh, forgive me! but I cannot!" cried Lily May.

"Dearest, this is very strange," said Gladys, turning to her husband.

"It is, my love. But—I have been watching the face of that young girl, and I believe that she is telling the truth."

"I believe so, too. But—she has left her home and cannot tell why. It is inexplicable!"

"Dear wife, in this world of diverse wickedness, there may be a combination of circumstances that would make it proper for a young girl to fly from her home, and painful for her to explain the reason," said Arthur.

"Oh, may Heaven bless you, sir, for saying that! It is true in my case!" said Lily May, in fervent gratitude, taking Arthur's hand and raising it as if she would have pressed it to her lips; but dropping it without doing so. The first instinct was right—it was her father's hand The after-thought was wrong, but it governed the action, as it generally does.

"You were driven from your home then by some wickedness within it?" said Arthur.

"Oh, no, no, no," eagerly and passionately answered Lily May—"there is no wickedness in my beloved home! Angels dwell there and saints. Ah, yes, they do, if ever they wore the human form or dwelt in human habitations. But there was wickedness behind my life, and around my home and in my destiny. Oh, this much will I tell you! It was from the dear love of my home and those who dwelt

within it that I left it this morning, and left it forever, praying the Lord's eternal blessings on it!"

"It *is* all *very* inexplicable!" said Gladys. "But whatever the mystery is, I am sure that you are what you assert yourself to be—a good girl. And as such I bid you welcome to our house. Be at peace; you shall not go away, either to-night or to-morrow, or any day until you please to go, and I know that you go to a home of goodness and safety."

"Oh, thank you! Oh, bless you!" fervently exclaimed Lily May, seizing the hand of the lady and pressing it to her lips and to her heart.

"And now, poor child, will you not let me write a note and send to your friends to relieve them of the intense anxiety they must suffer for your sake?" said Gladys, gently.

"Oh, no, no, no; it would only bring them here, and they would take me back, and I must not go! I must stay away from them forever, for their sakes! their own dear sakes! Oh! I know that they are suffering great anxiety and distress! but I cannot help that. Sorrow is better than shame!"

"So it is; but what shame has to do with one so young and sweet and pure as you certainly are, is a mystery to me," said Gladys.

"Let it remain so, dear lady," replied Lily May.

"Have you a father?" inquired Arthur.

"I never knew my father," replied Lily May, in a low voice.

"Died perhaps while you were still an infant?"

"Perhaps," repeated Lily May, in an almost inaudible voice.

Arthur gazed at her so wistfully that she dropped her eyes. And then he became conscious that he was giving her pain, and he turned away.

"Have you a mother, dear child?" inquired Gladys, tenderly taking her hand.

"The only mother that I ever knew died when I was less than three years old. She was not my real mother; but she was a saint on earth and she is an angel in heaven," said Lily May.

"Have you brothers or sisters, dear?" farther inquired the lady.

"None of my own; but the son and daughter of that sweet woman who was a mother to me are as dear to my heart as if they were my brother and sister—and dearer, too, I think."

"Is it their home that you have left, my child?"

Lily May nodded her head and sobbed.

Gladys laid her hand gently on her brown curls and inquired:

"What is their name?"

Lily May looked up piteously.

"Lady," she said, "when an Arab receives a poor wanderer in his tent, he succors him without ever asking him his lineage. He may be the enemy of his tribe, but he comes and goes unquestioned."

"You are answered, my dear," gravely spoke Arthur.

"At least tell me your own name, that I may know what to call you," persisted Gladys, who seemed to feel instinctively that she had a right to question this fair girl.

"I have no name to which I have any right except the name that was given me in baptism—Mary."

"Mary! it is a pretty name, but a very common one; though it can never seem common-place to me. I had a dear little child called Mary—the only child I ever had. Her little grave is far away from this; but if she had lived she would have been just about your age now."

While Gladys spoke, Lily May forgot her own sorrows in the sympathy she felt for the lady.

"I am sorry your little baby died. Its death must have

been a great grief to you. But it is an angel in Heaven, you know; and you will meet it there to be parted from it never more," she said, in the tenderest tones of pity.

"You feel for me, poor child. You who have so many sorrows of your own. You who have no home and no name," said Gladys, stooping and kissing her. Then turning to her husband, with the tears in her eyes, she whispered:

"Oh, dearest, we must shelter and protect this poor girl. She is just the age our own dear child would have been if she had lived. And suppose she had lived and come to this. As indeed she might have done had Mrs. Llewellyn's schemes succeeded. For our dear lost child's sake, we must be good to this girl."

"Do just as you please, my own dear wife, and you will be sure to do right," answered Arthur, in the same low tone, which was inaudible to the subject of their interest.

Gladys, without leaving the drawing-room, laid off her bonnet and mantle, and then rang the bell.

The footman answered it.

"Send my maid here, Lemuel, and serve supper," was the order the lady gave.

Lemuel bowed and left the room, which was soon entered by the trim lady's-maid.

Gladys with her own tender hands removed the mantle of Lily May and picked up her bonnet. Laying them beside her own on the table, she said:

"Take these things up-stairs, and put them away, Bessy, and have the rose-chamber prepared for this young lady. She remains with us for the present."

Bessy laid the mantles over her arm and took the bonnets in her hand, and left the room.

And at the same moment, Lemuel opened the folding doors connecting the drawing-room with the dining-room, and announced supper.

"Come, my dear, trouble never takes away the appetite

of the very young," said Gladys, slipping the hand of Lily May through her arm, and leading her to the table.

It was an elegantly-appointed table, the napery of the finest damask, and the service of gold plate, Sevres china and Bohemian glass.

It was covered with rich and delicate viands and rare wines.

The pictures that adorned the walls of the room were the choicest specimens of ancient and modern art.

But Gladys observed that none of these signs of wealth attracted the notice of her young guest; and thence she argued that the fair girl had been accustomed to these things. And she argued justly, for though the home of Lily May had been always plain and simple in its style and its appointments, yet she had been on easy visiting terms with Cora Campbell and others of her schoolmates, whose parents' establishments were more or less on a princely scale.

Gladys, who always took black tea for her own supper, sent a cup to Lily May, while Arthur placed upon the plate of the young girl the breast and wing of a partridge, and Lemuel stood at her elbow offering her some light and delicate biscuits. Poor Lily May was really very hungry, as well as very tired.

And she was such a mere child, that she not only freely ate of the dainties that were placed before her, but during the meal she several times closed her eyes and almost nodded.

"Poor child, how tired and sleepy she is! She must go to rest," said Gladys, ringing the bell for the servants to remove the service, and then rising from the table.

"Come with me, my dear. I will show you to your room," said Gladys, once more slipping the hand of Lily May through her arm.

"Good-night, sir! I thank you very much for all your

kindness to me," said Lily May, looking back, offering her hand to her host.

"You are more than welcome, my child, to any services that we can render you. I hope you will have a good night's rest. God bless you," he replied, pressing her hand and relinquishing it. Then Gladys led her from the room through the spacious, magnificently-furnished and brilliantly-lighted hall, up the broad white stone and richly-carpeted stairs, to an upper hall, upon which many chamber doors opened.

Gladys opened a door on the right, and led her young guest into a spacious bedroom, elegantly furnished with rosewood bedstead and wardrobes, and rosewood and marble-topped bureaus and stands, and rose-colored curtains and rose-covered chairs—hence called the rose-room. Nearly dead with weariness, quite unable to stand upon her feet, or to keep her eyes open any longer, Lily May sank down into the depths of a soft easy-chair, and closed her eyes.

There was a delicate night-dress of fine cambric and lace laid out upon the bed.

With her own gentle hands Gladys disrobed Lily May, and clothed her in this garment, and half-led, half-carried her to the bed and put her upon it.

Lily May, paralyzed by fatigue, was as passive as an infant in her hands.

When Gladys had laid her in the bed, drawn the white counterpane over her, and made her comfortable, she still stood by her, as if fascinated to the spot.

Lily May, as soon as her head touched the pillow, fell asleep.

Gladys watched her.

Presently, Lily May, starting out of her sleep, looked up and saw the lady still standing over her. Smiling like an awakening infant, Lily May put up her hands, took the lady around the neck and drew her face down and kissed

her—as if she had a right to do it. And then she fell asleep in good earnest.

Gladys watched over her, until she felt sure that the sleeper would not awake again soon, and then pressing a kiss upon her brow and praying a blessing upon her head, she left her.

Gladys then returned to the drawing-room, where she found Arthur walking thoughtfully backward and forward.

"Arthur, do you know I feel strangely drawn to this poor child? I do not think that I would even like to part with her now."

"I also feel a deep and growing interest in her. She is very lovely. And, Gladys, do you know one thing?"

"What is it, Arthur?"

"She is the living image of yourself! or rather, of yourself as you appeared at her age. Now, my Gladys, you have grown rather plump with years and rosy with health and bright with happiness."

"Like *me?* Why, is she really like me? But I have black hair and she has brown."

"That does not diminish the likeness. She is the image of what you were at her age, with the exception of the slight difference in the shade of the hair."

"Perhaps you only imagine so, Arthur dear. But whether she is like me or not, I feel as if I would never consent to part with her. We are childless, dear Arthur. And I have many lonely hours that this fair girl would cheer."

"I know it, my dear wife. And I do not see any reason why you should not keep the girl if it is proper to do so. A very few days will decide that question."

"But on Saturday we start for Europe. And if in the meantime this question remains undecided?"

"My dear impulsive Gladys! 'Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.' We have time enough before us to

consider what is to be done with the beautiful waif that chance has wafted to our door," said Arthur.

And as it was growing late, he rang for Lemuel to close up the house, and then they retired.

Before going into her own room, Gladys slipped into her guest's chamber to feast her eyes once more upon the face of the sleeping girl, who so strangely fascinated her attention.

The gas had been lowered and was burning very dimly, and the room was in that sweet semi-toned light that is so soothing to the wearied occupant. Gladys stood by the bed and looked upon the sleeper and smiled to see her sleep so sweetly. Then she stole on tip-toe from the room.

CHAPTER XLI.

SYMPATHY.

No radiant gem, which crested fortune wears,
No pearl that glimmering hangs from beauty's ears,
Not the bright stars which night's blue arch adorn,
Nor rising sun that gilds the vernal morn,
Shine with such lustre as the tear which flows
Down woman's tender cheek for other's woes.—*Darwin.*

Lily May slept soundly until near morning. Then she awoke, refreshed, but very much perplexed to find herself in a luxurious bed-chamber alone. For this sleep also had been one of deep oblivion; and the awakening was confusion. She had again to collect her thoughts and explore her memory. But it did not take her so long to do so now, as it had taken her after her first sad awakening. In a very few minutes she recollected both where she was and how she came in her present situation. And instantly a pang of remorseful tenderness pierced her heart. She seemed to realize intensely for the first time how great the agony

of Owen must have been on discovering her flight! how great that agony must be still! must be until time should wear it out.

Prior to this—at first the stunning shock of the revelation that had been made to her, and then the benumbing despair in which she had left her home, and finally the stupefying fatigue of mind and body that had ensued upon all—had made her incapable of fully realizing the distress she had brought upon her beloved friends.

But now, awaking refreshed in the stillness of her bedchamber and the coolness of the early morning hours, she keenly felt the wounds that she had inflicted upon them and bitterly reproached herself.

"And, oh! to think I could be so hard-hearted as to sleep! While they—I know they have not slept a wink to-night! Oh, Owen! oh, my dear, kind, good brother! How *could* I leave you so! How *could* I do it! But it was for your own honor! For nothing else would I have left you, Owen; it seems so long since I left you. Oh, if I could only see your face for a moment! Or hear your voice speak one word! Oh, shall I never see your dear eyes looking into mine again! never hear your dear voice calling me again! never more! never more! I cannot bear it! I can—cannot bear it! I have tri—tried to do more than I was able! I shall die! I shall die!" gasped and sobbed the poor girl, burying her face in the pillows and shaking her whole slight frame in the passion of her grief. Hour after hour she sobbed and cried, with only short intervals of cessation like the fitful lulls in a storm. At last, when the earliest beams of the rising sun were glinting through the interstices of the Venetian shutters, Lily May had wept herself into exhaustion, and then into sleep.

Two hours later Gladys, in white cashmere dressing-gown and soft slippers, stole on tip-toe into the room, to gaze upon her new-found prize, for such she considered the stranger.

"She has been crying; she has been crying very bitterly, poor child," said the lady, as she stooped over the young girl and noticed the damp, dishevelled hair, the flushed and tear-stained face, the tear-drops still hanging on the eye-lashes, and the fitfully-shaken bosom—shaken by sobs that still in sleep disturbed the sleeper.

Gladys lightly laid her hand upon the fair girl's brow. Perhaps there was mesmeric power in the touch, for the shuddering sobs gradually ceased; the troubled bosom grew still; the trembling lips and quivering eye-lashes closed, and the restless slumberer slept in peace.

Then did Gladys glide from Lily May's room and return to her own, to make her breakfast toilet.

She rang for the house-maid, and gave orders that the young lady who was their guest was not to be disturbed.

Arthur and Gladys breakfasted alone, and talked of their mysterious guest.

After breakfast Arthur walked out. Gladys tried various means to while away the time until the fair girl, who had taken such a strong hold upon her sympathies, should awake. She tried a little embroidery, but could not settle herself to the work. She tried a little music, but that would not do. She cut the leaves of a new magazine; but there was not an article in it that could fix her attention. At last she rang for her maid. And when that young person came, Gladys said:

"Tell the house-maid that as soon as the young lady in the rose-room wakes she must come and inform me. But warn her that the young lady is not to be disturbed on any account."

And when Bessy went away with these instructions, Bessy's mistress tried a little drawing; but that would not do. So she took to pacing up and down the room.

It was eleven o'clock before Lily May opened her eyes. And on this occasion she awoke calmer and more collected than she had done since the revelation that had so wounded

her spirit and bewildered her senses. She awoke now with a clear remembrance of all that had happened within the last two days. But ah! in the same ratio that her mind cleared, her heart sank.

She looked around on the luxurious and beautiful rose-room in which she found herself, and was struck with remorse for being in the midst of so much comfort and elegance, while she felt sure that the dear friends she had left at home were mourning her absence and suffering the keenest anxiety on her account.

"Oh!" she sobbed, "I should rather be fasting in sackcloth and ashes for leaving such a loving brother and sister, and giving them so much sorrow! But it was for their honor I left them. Oh, yes, Owen, dearest—honor! Honor, Lily Gay! For if I am something not fit for a lady's lips to speak or ears to hear, I am not fit to be your companion. That is certain. So it was for your own honor and respectability that I left you, dearest loves. And for that cause you must bear the grief of losing poor Lily May. And I must endure the bit—bitter agony of parting from you."

And she ended with an irrepressible burst of sobs.

"But I will write to you to-day, and tell you that I am well, and well taken care of. I will leave out the date and the address. I will direct the letter to the cottage, and send it through the general post-office. And that will relieve your anxiety for my safety, without informing you where to look for me. Honor, Owen dearest! Honor, darling Lily Gay!"

Saying this, she dried her tears and arose from her bed.

Always accustomed to wait on herself, she rung no bell; but went to the wash-stand, and filled her own basin from the ewer, and set about the preparation of her simple morning toilet.

Her movements about the room at length attracted the attention of the upper housemaid, who was on the watch, while engaged in mending sheets, in an opposite chamber.

She came to the door, and looked in; saw that the young lady was up, and then went to report the fact to her mistress.

"Lay a nice breakfast on the little round-table of my sitting-room; it is so much prettier than the dining-room," said his mistress to Lemuel, as she arose and went up stairs to see her guest.

Lily May had finished washing, and now stood before the dressing-glass combing and curling her beautiful brown hair. She saw the lady enter by the reflection of her figure in the glass, and she turned immediately and went to meet her.

"I hope you rested well last night, my dear," said the lady, taking the hand of her guest and kissing her.

"I rested very well, and I do thank you so much! Oh! you don't know how much you did for me last night in letting me stay here. I had no place to go to; and but for your goodness I should have been in the streets all night, and I do not believe that I could have lived until morning."

Saying this, Lily May lifted the lady's hand to her lips and kissed it fervently.

Ah! what an electric thrill the pressure of those soft lips caused!

"My dear, don't speak of such a possibility as your being in the streets all night. It appals me! But such a thing could not have happened. I hope there is not in the length and breadth of New York a house that would not have received you for the night, at least, had you asked for shelter," said the lady, earnestly.

"Do you think so? But I should have been afraid to ask. I did not even come here with any intention to ask for shelter. I came to the porch because I thought no one lived in the house; and I fell asleep; and that was the way in which you found me; and it was not until after I woke up in the drawing-room that I dared to ask to stay," said Lily May, frankly.

"You were so frightened, my poor girl! Oh, your spirit must have been deeply wounded, indeed!" began the lady; but her voice broke down in tears; she was thinking, as she long afterwards confessed:

"Suppose it had been my own child, so driven to desperation; so desolate; and so exposed!"

And she was pitying her young guest as she would have pitied her own child.

"Don't grieve," said Lily May. "Oh, please don't grieve for me! Indeed, I shall do very well. I can sew very neatly; Lily Gay——" she caught her breath, stopped short, and, childlike, clapped her hand to her mouth and opened her eyes in affright.

She had said too much in naming a member of her family.

"What were you saying, my dear? Trust me and speak freely," said the lady, wiping her eyes.

"Did you—did you hear the name I mentioned?" inquired Lily May, anxiously.

"Yes, dear, it was Milly Gray, was it not?"

"No," said Lily May, smiling brightly, with returning confidence, "it wasn't that. Never mind!"

"What was it you were going to say, dear? You may trust me fully."

"I was going to say that you need not grieve for me, dear lady; nor feel any compassionate anxiety on my account. But if you have confidence enough in me, so far to befriend me as to recommend me to a situation, I could get my living as a seamstress. I can sew very neatly. I got the prize for plain-sewing at school; and myself and my sister used to make all our own dresses and Owen's ——" again she caught her breath, stopped short, clapped her hand to her mouth and looked frightened.

"What is the matter, my dear?"

"Oh, don't tell! Please, don't!" pleaded Lily May.

"Don't tell what, my dear! What do you mean?"

"The name! It slipped out! You heard it, did you not?"

"Yes, dear, it was Bowen."

Lily May smiled again in reviving confidence.

"Now, then, dear, finish what you were going to say to me."

"Dear lady, it might all be said in two words. I am a good dressmaker and shirtmaker; and if you would kindly recommend me to some of your friends who may be in need of a seamstress, I should not discredit your recommendation, and I should be very grateful."

"We will talk about that after a while, my dear. Now finish dressing, that you may take breakfast."

"It is late, I fear."

"It is nearly twelve, my dear," said the lady, smiling.

"Twelve!" exclaimed the girl, in surprise, catching up a small, gold, enamelled watch (a birth-day present from Owen) and consulting it. "It has run down! Ah! I have not wound it up for two nights! But is it nearly twelve? Why, I never slept later than seven o'clock in the morning, since I can remember!"

And she began to hurry with her dressing. She opened her leather-bag, and took from it various small articles of wearing apparel—a clean collar, cuffs, pocket-handkerchief and stockings.

Poor child! with all her reticence, she was a bad hand at keeping a secret. All these little articles laid out upon the dressing-table were marked with her name:

"*Lily May.*"

And the lady, without seeking to pry into the secret at all, easily, and even inadvertently, read the name.

When Lily May's simple toilet was complete, she carefully replaced all her little personal effects that were not in immediate use into her leather-bag.

"Now, dear lady, I am ready to attend you," said Lily May, with something of that sweet courtesy which had

distinguished her before the reception of that startling news which had jarred all her being into temporary chaos.

The lady smiled and led the way to a pretty little apartment on the same floor—a *boudoir*, as a fine lady would have called it; a sitting-room, as it was called by Gladys, who always insisted that the English language was good enough for her use.

Into this sitting-room, then, whose white lace and blue silk-curtained windows looked out upon a pleasant garden at the back of the house, Gladys introduced her guest.

Near one of the windows stood a little round table covered with a deep fine white damask cloth; adorned with an elegant little service of silver and white Sevres china; and provided with a delicious breakfast of tea, chocolate, light rolls and biscuits, butter, game and fruit.

Two soft, deep resting-chairs were drawn up, one on each side of the table, and both so placed that the occupants could look through the window and enjoy the view of the garden while they were breakfasting.

Gladys placed her guest in one of these chairs and took the other herself, saying:

"This is my luncheon hour, my dear; so I shall share your repast."

"Oh, I am so glad of that. It will be so much pleasanter to breakfast with you for a companion than alone," said Lily May, smiling, as her hostess arranged the cups.

"Tea or chocolate, my dear?"

"Chocolate, please; and very sweet," said the schoolgirl.

The lady prepared a cup of the chosen beverage and passed it to her guest.

Then she poured out a cup of tea for herself, saying, with a smile:

"I am a tea-drinker, a very intemperate one, too; for I drink it three or four times a day. But this excess, which would hurt another person, really does me good; because,

years ago, the tone of my nervous system was so lowered by a long course of powerful sedatives that it has not yet recovered; so that the same quantity of nervous stimulant that would injuriously excite another person, scarcely affects me at all. Here are some ortolan, dear, a delicious little bird, roasted on skewers. These are the first of the season, I really do believe, for they are seldom brought to market before the first of September," said the hostess, putting two or three of the tiny birds upon her guest's plate.

"Will not the gentleman come to luncheon?" inquired Lily May.

"No, my dear. For some insane reason or other, gentlemen always like to lunch down town and poison themselves with drugged wines and made dishes. *My* 'gentleman,' however, has gone down to one of the agencies for the ocean steamers to secure accommodations for us on the one that sails for Liverpool on the first of October."

"*Oh!*" exclaimed Lily May, in a disappointment that she could not conceal—"Are you really going away so soon?"

"Yes, dear; and we would go sooner only that we do not like to risk encountering the equinoctial gales. We go on business, to seek out, and make acquaintance with, the young man who, failing children of our own, is the heir-in-law of our old family estate. He is a baronet; but very poor, I am told; and so we think he would be all the better for a little assistance now. But, oh, how strange it is that I, who am not usually of an indiscreet or gossiping tendency, should be telling you all our family affairs, as if you were an old acquaintance, an intimate friend, or a near relation! How very strange!"

"But I am so sorry you are going away! so sorry!" said Lily May, ready to cry.

"Don't look so woe-begone, my dear! Before we go I

shall see that your future is made secure. I will place you either among my friends or in some boarding school. I will do that for the sake of my own dear child who died sixteen years ago."

"Oh, it is not of myself I am thinking, but of the parting from you. I have not known you long, dear lady; but you have been such a tender friend to me that I should grieve to part with you for so long a time as a voyage to Europe would occupy."

"Perhaps you will not have to part with me, dear. I myself should love to have so sweet a companion in my voyage."

"And I would make myself useful," said Lily May, eagerly; "indeed I would. I would do all your sewing, and keep your clothes in order, and the gentleman's too. I would be your little maid. I would like to be, for love, you know."

"Thank you, thank you, my dear. If, when the time comes, I see no reason against your going, you shall go, not as my maid—that is not to be thought of, for you are a young lady—but as my little friend and companion."

"Oh, I would be so grateful and so useful, whether you would let me be your maid or not! And if you were sick, I would nurse you. I should so love to nurse you! Yes, and I am a very good nurse too. I know a great deal about sickness, for Owen's father was a doc——" Lily May caught her breath and clapped her hand to her lips, and stared with affright. Again she had been on the point of revealing—if she had not quite revealed—her secret.

Truly she was very unskilful in concealment.

And before another word could be uttered, Arthur entered the room in haste, cast his cap upon a side-table, and threw himself into a chair. He was in such a state of excitement that he either did not see, or seeing, did not recognize, his young guest.

Lily May, perceiving that something was wrong, with

delicate tact swiftly arose, slipped from the room, and went to her own chamber to seek writing materials to write the letter that she intended should give ease to Owen's mind, without revealing her dwelling-place.

As soon as Lily May had left the room, Gladys turned to her husband and inquired:

"Arthur, what on earth is the matter? You look as if you had seen a ghost."

"Perhaps I have—a ghost of the past, or the name of such a ghost."

"You speak in riddles."

"What do you think has happened?"

"What? How can I tell? You alarm me."

"Who do you think has had the effrontery to return to this country?"

"Who? Do you mean James Stukely?"

"No; poor innocent fellow! he came back years ago. No; not he."

"Who, then? You do not mean——?"

"Yes."

"Not——?"

"Yes, I say!"

"Mrs. Jay Llewellyn?"

"Herself!"

"Arthur! what do you mean to do?"

"To have her arrested!"

"No! Let bygones be bygones."

"What! with a woman stained and blackened with every known and unknown crime in the universe! Never!"

"Arthur, the length of time that has elapsed since the commission of those crimes will give her immunity from punishment."

"It will not, Gladys. Years ago she escaped the penalty of her crimes by flight. As a fugitive from justice, she is liable to arrest whenever and wherever she can be found. And I no sooner saw her name among the passengers that

arrived by the Hungarian this morning than I went to the police-office and set the police on her track."

"A woman, Arthur——"

"No! no woman, but a fiend whom I will hunt back to Hades! Oh, the time has been long, but justice shall still triumph!"

CHAPTER XLII.

MR. STUKELY AND HIS ONLY MOTHER.

Approach thou like the rugged Russian bear,
The armed rhinoceros, or the Hyrean tiger;
Take any shape but that, and my firm nerves
Shall never tremble.—*Shakspeare.*

THE years that had passed so prosperously over the heads of Owen and his sisters had passed thriftily over those of Mr. Stukely and his wife.

Mr. Stukely drove the peddling business, and throve upon it. And "Miss Nelly," as he persisted in miscalling his lawful spouse, helped him by making and trimming caps, cuffs, collars, and under-sleeves, and dressing dolls for his sales.

Time had brought them three children, all girls, aged respectively three years, eighteen months, and six weeks old. And yet bright, active, energetic Miss Nelly kept but one servant, a half-grown, almshouse girl.

The young couple were very popular with all classes of society in their neighborhood; and strangely enough, they mingled socially with all classes. Mr. Stukely's birth and position as master of the old Forest Lodge estate, or what was left of it, gave him a standing in the county which even his pursuit of "perambulatory commerce," as he called his trade, could not seriously affect. And this was not the result of any effort on the part of James Stukely to

keep up his connection with the landed gentry of the neighborhood; but of his own, unsought, personal popularity. He was such a simple, innocent, unpretending young man—always so naturally and sincerely deferring to the opinions of others, that no one could help liking him. And Miss Nelly, with her good looks and gayety, was almost as great a favorite as her husband.

And so the young couple were often invited out to dinner or tea by their neighbors.

They were very happy and very prosperous, notwithstanding, or, perhaps, because of the fact that Miss Nelly was master of the business as well as mistress of the house; as it was inevitable she should be—having the stronger intellect and will of the two. It may seem strange that Nelly Blythe, with her keen, bright, strong intelligence, should have loved and married such a simple fellow as James Stukely; but apparently she loved him for his comely person, affectionate heart and good disposition, and married him to take care of him.

And it is certain that while some women in marrying seek strength to lean on and wisdom to learn from, other women of more force of character and self-reliance seek weakness to support and simplicity to guide; and marry men of fewer years or feebler natures than their own.

Miss Nelly belonged to this second and smaller, or perhaps exceptional class of women. Mr. Stukely was really two years older than Miss Nelly; but he was so much weaker in mind that she looked upon him almost as one of the children—and with altogether as much cherishing tenderness.

He was deeply conscious of all that he owed to his bright little wife, and he was accustomed to tell her and others that it was very extraordinary, but if it had not been for Miss Nelly he should have gone to the dogs long ago; an opinion in which all his hearers silently agreed.

In all these years he had not heard from his "only

mother." He suffered some occasional twinges of remorse for not writing to her; but he feared to disturb her, and he hoped that she would remain in ignorance of his present residence.

But events soon proved that Mrs. Llewellyn must always have known where to pounce upon her son whenever she should desire to do so; and like the leopardess, she was only drawing back to make the fiercer spring.

It was a fine day in September. Mr. Stukely had sold out all his spring and summer goods, and had not yet received his autumn and winter stock. So he had a holiday, and was making the most of it in the bosom of his family.

They were all in the old drawing-room, which for its spacious size, many leaf-shaded windows and free ventilation, was a favorite resort. Miss Nelly never would permit this room to be fitted up and kept for company, because she said it would ruin her in carpeting and curtaining; but she had chosen a much smaller room in the opposite side of the hall, and furnished it neatly as the "best parlor."

They were all in the old drawing-room then.

Miss Nelly—while waiting for the autumn and winter fashions to arrive before she could make up any more caps, cuffs, collars and undersleeves for her customers—was seated on the old sofa, engaged in the homely employment of mending clothes, a large-sized work-basket full of which was beside her.

Mr. Stukely sat at the other end of the sofa, giving one of the little children a ride on his boot to the time-honored tune of "Ride a cob horse to Banbury Cross." He was very happy. No shadow of coming evil darkened the brightness of his countenance. Mr. Stukely had not a prophetic soul.

The other of the two little children was crawling around her mother's feet in search of the tortoise-shell kitten, which had taken refuge within the fortifications of Miss Nelly's crinoline.

The youngest babe was fast asleep in the cradle.

And Patty, the poor-house girl, was watching the dinner cooking on the kitchen stove.

"'Ride a cob horse to Banbury Cross!'" sang Mr. Stukely, tossing the babe high to make her laugh aloud and lose her breath—"'To see an old woman jump on the white horse'——"

"Hush!" said Miss Nelly, pausing with the needle in her hand and listening—"I thought I heard a carriage."

"Well, my love, it is only some vehicle passing on the new road. You will have to get used to hearing them—'With rings on her fingers and bells on her toes'——"

"*Do* hush, James; I'm sure the carriage is coming towards the house!" insisted Miss Nelly, listening attentively.

"Nonsense, my dear; it is the echo makes it sound so near. 'And she shall have music where EVER she goes!'"

And Mr. Stukely ended the performance with a high toss and sudden fall that landed the rider on the old carpet.

Then, while Miss Nelly still listened acutely for the approaching wheels, he snatched up the other child, and with "even-handed justice" began to give her a ride to the inspiring music of—"Here we go up, up, up! and here we go down, down, downy!"

"James Stukely, the carriage *is* coming here; I am sure of it!" said Miss Nelly.

"Extraordinary! How you persist in a thing! What carriage should be coming here? And even if it should, what need *we* care? Let's enjoy ourselves: 'And here we go backwards and forwards, and here we go round, round, roundy!'"

"There! I told you so! It is coming into the yard!" said Miss Nelly, hastily hiding the most homely of the tattered garments under the cover of the work-basket. "And now here it is coming right up to the door!"

"Well, 'let it come,' as the beggar said of the comet—

'it can't hurt me!'" replied Mr. Stukely, gayly, tossing his baby up and down.

But at that moment the carriage was seen to roll past the windows and heard to stop at the door.

"Some of the neighbors from 'Rogues' Harbor,'" said Mr. Stukely, now hoisting a child on each knee and trotting them both to the tune of the lively jig—"Hippittit-Tippitty."

The very next moment the door opened and admitted—

Mrs. Jay Llewellyn and her familiar demon, the deaf-mute.

Mr. Stukely dropped both his babies, tottered to his feet, and stood with open mouth and eyes staring and chattering

"Ex—ex—ex—ex—traordinary!"

The children, released, threw themselves behind the entrenchments of their mother's skirts, from which defences they cautiously reconnoitred the enemy.

Miss Nelly had never seen Mrs. Llewellyn; but knew at once who the intruder must be, and stood just as she had risen, with her needle-work in her hand, looking a little startled, a little more curious, and most of all, defiant.

"What is all this?" demanded Mrs. Llewellyn, speaking as if she had just returned from a morning's drive and an absence of a few hours, instead of from a sea-voyage and an expatriation of several years. "What is this, I ask you? And who is that bold woman?"

"It—tit—tit—tit—it's Miss Nelly! And please don't hurt her. I'm sure she's del—lel—lel—lel—lighted to see you, mother, and so am I!" stammered Mr. Stukely, but his look of consternation belied his words.

"WHAT!" fiercely demanded the woman, in a tone like a thunder-clap, at which Mr. Stukely started and winced as if he had been struck. "What is the meaning of this, sir? Whose brats are those?" she added, pointing to the peeping babies.

"They—cy—cy—cy—cy——" began Mr. Stukely; but instead of getting on, he stopped and shivered and shook.

The brats in question, finding attention particularly called to themselves, drew in their little heads like turtles, and hid them behind the folds of their mother's skirts.

"I ask you, sir, whose are those?" demanded the lady, scowling darkly on her son.

"They are Mim—mim—mim—mim—Miss Nelly's and mi—mi—mi—mi—mine!" chattered Mr. Stukely.

"You shameless villain!" cried the lady, glaring malignantly at Miss Nelly. "How *dare* you bring a creature like that into *my* house?"

"Bub—bub—bub—bub—but she's an honest woman! She is indeed, mother. Don't hurt her! Pitch into me! It was all my fault!" implored Mr. Stukely, getting before Miss Nelly, and spreading out his arms to protect her. And to do the poor fellow justice, it was not for himself, but for Miss Nelly that he was so desperately frightened.

"*Silence!*" thundered the lady, in a voice and with a stamp that shook the windows and woke the baby.

"James Stukely," said Mrs. James, gently putting him aside, "go and take the baby into the nursery, and leave me to deal with this lady."

"Dud—dud—don't say any thing to her, Miss Nelly, my dear—don't! She's got a horrid tem—I mean, a high spirit has my only mother."

"I don't care how high her spirit is; I can raise mine higher. Go and do as I tell you, James Stukely."

"But I dud—dare not leave you alone with her, Miss Nelly. Indeed, she might hurt—I meant to say——"

"I know what you meant to say, my dear; but there is no danger. Now do, like a good boy, take the poor baby away, and leave me to deal with this lady."

"But, Miss Nelly——"

"Do as the woman tells you, and don't stand chattering

and shivering there like a fool!" ripped out Mrs. Llewellyn, every word sounding like a blow.

"Oh, Lor! oh, dear! oh! what shall I do? They're both such awful tem—high-spirited women; they'll do each other mischief, I am sure they will!——Hish-sh! there, come to its pappy," said Mr. Stukely, as he unwillingly crept away to the cradle, and took up the baby, and carried it from the room.

But instead of carrying it quite away, he hovered about the door, dandling and hushing it, and peeping cautiously in to watch the opponents lest they should proceed to extremities.

"Now then, you, woman! I suppose you know that you and your brats have got to tramp immediately!"

"Ah!" said Miss Nelly, coolly.

"This instant! Not another second shall this house be contaminated by the presence of a creature like you!"

"Indeed!" said Miss Nelly, raising her eyebrows.

"Don't answer me in that manner, you impudent minx!"

"You are Mrs. Jay Llewellyn, I presume?" said Miss Nelly, quite calmly.

"What is that to you, you bold minx?" scornfully demanded the lady.

"You just now wished to know who I was; so, assuming you to be Mrs. Jay Llewellyn, I introduce myself. I am Mrs. James Stukely, your son's wife."

"So it would seem; but without the aid of church or State."

"And as such I bid you welcome to Forest Lodge," continued the young wife, calmly passing over the insult, and courteously presenting her hand.

"That's right, Miss Nelly. That's the way to behave to an only mother. You're an angel, Miss Nelly, and I love you.——*Hish-ish!* there, there, don't cry, pappy's pet!" put in Mr. Stukely, from his post of observation, while he gently tossed and soothed his youngest born.

No one replied to him, however, for Mrs. Llewellyn, striking away the offered hand of her daughter-in-law, with angry scorn replied:

"*You, you* dare to say that *you* welcome *me* to my own house——"

"Your *son's* house, madam, I welcome you to."

"You impudent, bold-faced vixen!"

"Oh, Lor! oh, dear! they'll come to blows! *Hish-ish!* that's a dear baby," said Mr. Stukely, putting his head in at the door, watching the disputants, dandling the baby, and bewailing his own fate.

"Don't call hard names, Mrs. Llewellyn."

"How dare you take my name between your shameful lips, you——"

"Oh, Lor! Oh, dear! Oh, mother, don't! Miss Nelly is a very high-spirited woman, and she might do you a mischief. *Hish*—that's a good baby."

"Hold your tongue, you fool! And *you*, minx! what have you been doing to turn the head of that booby?"

"I have been marrying him," coolly answered Miss Nelly.

"Marrying him! Do you dare to persist that you are *married* to him—*you?*"

"Do *you* dare to insinuate that I should be here unless I *were* married to him?" now angrily demanded the young wife.

"Oh, my goodness me, what shall I do? Oh, Miss Nelly, don't aggravate her; she's a very high-spirited woman, is my mother. Hish-ish—hish-ish!" said Mr. Stukely, still hovering about the door, and alternately expostulating with the woman and soothing the baby.

"Come, Mrs. Llewellyn," continued Miss Nelly, in a calmer tone, "I see very plainly how the matter stands with you. You have been driven here by necessity, else you had never come. Such being the case, Mrs. Llewellyn, and you being my husband's mother, you shall be welcome,

always provided that you treat us both with reasonable regard."

"That's right, Miss Nelly. Thank you, my dear. Oh, you are—Hish! there, then! don't cry, pappy's baby—a real treasure, my dear! *that* you are!" put in Mr. Stukely, from the door.

"Make terms with *you*, you impudent thing?" exclaimed Mrs. Llewellyn, scornfully.

"I think you had best. The terms are easy. I only require that you shall cease to use bad words and call hard names, and that you shall treat us with common decency in return for the welcome that we shall give you."

"And if I do not choose to do so, minx! how then?"

"Even then, Mrs. Llewellyn, I should not show you the door."

"Oh, you wouldn't."

"No; because you are my husband's mother, and to do so would be undutiful. But I tell you what I *would* do."

"What?"

"I would leave you in possession of the house, and take your unfortunate son away from it, and make him a home somewhere else, where he could enjoy the peace his kind heart deserves."

"You would!" screamed the lady.

"Yes, I would. For in two words, Mrs. Llewellyn, I will not have him driven into mania or idiocy, as he may be if subjected to your ill treatment for any length of time. For his head is not very strong."

"No; Heaven knows it is not; or he would never have taken up with you," retorted the lady.

"Mother! Miss Nelly! Oh, do for goodness sake, don't pitch into each other so. Don't let your angry passions rise. Remember Watts! *Do* remember Watts! 'Let dogs delight to,' *et cetera*. Oh, my goodness gracious me, I know I ought to be very thankful and all that for the blessings I enjoy in such a wife and such a mother;

but—there! hish-ish; don't cry; pappy ain't scolding pappy's baby."

Thus spoke Mr. Stukely, while the skirmish of words was actively kept up by the ladies.

"And when I say his head is not very strong, Mrs. Llewellyn, I also say, in the face of all that, that I love and esteem him. Yes, madam, you may stare in scornful astonishment that any one should love or esteem *your* son; but I do esteem, as well as love him, for his affectionate heart and good disposition and purely unselfish nature—qualities, Mrs. Llewellyn, that are not always possessed by men with stronger heads," said Miss Nelly.

"Yes, you artful minx! that was the style in which your false and flattering tongue deluded the poor boy! But your reign is over! You shall tramp!"

"Take care, Mrs. Llewellyn. I warn you that I will no longer submit to such language," exclaimed Miss Nelly, flushing to her brows.

"Oh, it's coming! It's coming now! Oh, my good gracious me, to have one's *only* wife and *only* mother pitch into each other so furiously. Hish-ish, pappy's baby."

Thus cried Mr. Stukely, almost dancing with distraction as he stood at the door, afraid to go in and afraid to go away, and driven nearly frantic with his dread of a collision between the women on the one side and his desire to soothe the baby on the other.

Meanwhile the war of words went on vigorously.

Mrs. Llewellyn's language and manners were both to the last degree insulting and exasperating.

Miss Nelly, with all her desire for peace and order, lost her patience and her temper together, and retorted—"giving the lady as good as she sent," to use Miss Nelly's own expression.

Indeed, there were words bandied on both sides that I would not like to set down here.

At length the battle waged so fiercely that Mr. Stukely

could no longer restrain himself; but, with the baby still clasped in one arm, he danced distractedly towards them, crying out:

"Oh, mother! Oh, Miss Nelly! Don't let your angry passions rise so high! Don't let the heathen rage together so furiously. Remember Doctor Watts and the hymn-book! And 'let bears and lions,' you know, because 'it is their nature, too!' Oh, dear! dear me! They are not minding a word I say!" cried the desperate fellow, grabbing wildly at his hair with one hand while he held the baby fast with the other.

And the wordy war was waged in spite of him.

"Pray how does your dupe support himself, you insolent vixen?" sharply demanded Mrs. Llewellyn.

"By peddling, you refined lady," quietly answered Miss Nelly.

"Peddling!" screamed Mrs. Llewellyn, in angry scorn.

"Per-per-per-per-perambulatory commerce, mother! It is perambulatory commerce, Miss Nelly, my dear! There's every thing in a name!" stammered Mr. Stukely, deprecatingly.

But his mother did not deign to notice his well-meant endeavor to smooth matters over by fine words.

"*Peddling?*—What! have you degraded him to *that*, you low——"

"Take care, Mrs. Llewellyn, you are getting upon dangerous ground! I have warned you that I will not again submit to be called out of my name by you!" indignantly interrupted Miss Nelly.

And her flushed cheeks and flashing eyes added force to her words.

"Oh, Miss Nelly! Miss Nelly, my love," cried Mr. Stukely, dancing, "you have the best temper of the two. Not but what you both have excellent tempers; but yours is, perhaps, the most yielding! Consider, my dear, *do* con-

sider! She is my only mother! The only mother I have in the wide world——"

"Heaven help you if you had more of them!" exclaimed Miss Nelly.

"So bear with her for my sake," continued Mr. Stukely, without heeding the interruption.

"If you will stop dancing and be quiet, James Stukely, I will manage this lady," said Miss Nelly, firmly.

"Manage *me*, you audacious minx!" violently exclaimed Mrs. Llewellyn.

"Oh, there they go at it again! They'll come to blows presently!—Oh! thank goodness, there comes Parson Morley, and he'll make 'em keep the peace!" exclaimed Mr. Stukely, running excitedly towards the windows and looking out.

CHAPTER XLIII.

A LUCKY VISITOR.

His very manners teach to amend,
They are so even, grave and holy;
No stubbornness so stiff, nor folly
To license ever was so light,
As twice to trespass in his sight;
His look would so correct it when
He chid the vice yet not the men.—*Ben Jonson.*

And, in fact, at that moment the parson's gig passed the windows and drew up before the door.

And the next instant Mr. Morley, admitted by Patty, entered the room.

Mr. Stukely, baby in arms, danced up to meet him, exclaiming eagerly:

"Thank Heaven! Oh, thank Heaven you have come, Mr. Morley! Surely Providence has sent you to me at this awful crisis. And you will save them!"

"Why, what is the matter?" inquired the parson, aghast at this address.

"Oh, sir, my wife and mother! forgetting all about Doctor Watts and 'dogs delight,' and pitching into each other like bears and lions! And they have given me the baby to hold till they fight it out!" exclaimed Mr. Stukely, in a scared whisper.

Mr. Morley, naturally enough, glanced at the ladies in question.

But, at the first entrance of the reverend visitor, they had suspended hostilities, and they now stood like combatants unwillingly interrupted and eager to continue the fray.

Mr. Morley saw that there was no immediate danger of a renewal of the contest, and he turned to Mr. Stukely and said:

"So your good mother has arrived!"

"Yes, sir," sighed Mrs. Llewellyn's only son.

"You were not expecting her?"

"No more than I was expecting an earthquake," said Mr. Stukely.

"It must have been a delightful surprise to you."

"So it was, sir, delightful," said Mr. Stukely, making up the most lugubrious face, in his efforts to smile.

"But what is this that you were telling me when I came in?—something about a misunderstanding between the ladies. It is nothing very serious, I hope," inquired Mr. Morley, lowering his voice.

"Oh no! nothing very serious!" replied Mr. Stukely, with the same galvanic effort to smile. "Only"—he added, in a lower tone—"they are ready to punch each other's heads!"

Just at that moment Mrs. Llewellyn, and even Miss Nelly, looked as if they would much rather "punch" Mr Stukely's head for his want of discretion in so frankly exposing them to Mr. Morley; while they were really restrain-

ing themselves and getting upon their good behavior before the minister.

Mr. Morley perceived the state of the case, and so discreetly stooped and whispered to Mr. Stukely:

"Present me to your good mother. I am anxious to make her acquaintance."

"Extraordinary! Are you? You shall do it, then, immediately. Come," said Mr. Stukely, leading the parson across the room and presenting him in this manner:

"Mother, this is the Reverend Mr. Morley, our minister. Mr. Morley, Mrs. Llewellyn—my only mother."

"I am very happy to make acquaintance with Mrs. Llewellyn. I have known her son most favorably for several years," said Mr. Morley, bowing low before the lady.

"Thank you, sir," with a haughty nod, was all the answer she returned.

"Mr. Morley is a very great favorite with Miss Nelly, and so is she with him," said Mr. Stukely, by way of saying something eminently conciliating.

"Yes! yes! I have a very great esteem for Mrs. James Stukely, and I hope the sentiment is returned. And I congratulate you, madam, on the possession of so charming a daughter-in-law," said Mr. Morley.

Mrs. Llewellyn drew down her mouth.

"And how are you, my child, and how are my little godchildren?" blandly continued the parson, shaking hands with Miss Nelly and patting the heads of the two little ones, who now ventured to come out from behind their intrenchments and show themselves.

"We are all well and happy, and very glad to see you, Mr. Morley. So now give me your hat and take a chair," said Miss Nelly, gayly; for her short-lived anger seemed all to have fled. She rang a bell, which brought Patty into the room. And then she turned and said:

"Mrs. Llewellyn, will you excuse my attendance, and

permit my little maid to show you to your chamber, where you can lay off your bonnet and wraps?"

What could Mrs. Llewellyn do? She could not continue to affect to treat as an improper person a young woman whom the pastor of the parish acknowledged as an esteemed friend, and for whose children he stood sponsor. At least, she could not do so in that pastor's presence. So, with a grim nod, she turned away.

"Show this lady into the best front bed-room that we keep for company, Patty; then take up fresh water and clean towels, and wait her orders," said Miss Nelly, in a low voice, to her little handmaid.

Truly, Miss Nelly, if she could have always kept her "angry passions" down, would have been an exemplary little woman.

Patty dropped an almshouse courtesy, and walked off in attendance upon her new old mistress.

Miss Nelly next turned her attention to the servant Mrs. Llewellyn had brought her. But the huge mute was nowhere to be seen.

"My dear," she said to Mr. Stukely, "will you go out and look after that negro, and find out whether his mistress wants the carriage put up or sent back to the village?"

"Find out? I will, if I can; but there is not a human being in the world, as I know of, that can communicate with that mute, but my mother. Here, take the baby, then," said Mr. Stukely, putting his youngest into the arms of Miss Nelly, and leaving the room to comply with her request.

Fortunately, he was not necessitated to draw upon his small stock of ingenuity to converse with the deaf mute. He found that Gorilla standing at the horses' heads, turning them in the direction of the outer gate with one powerful hand, while he pointed with the other towards the village. A pantomime so well understood by the watchful driver that he at once gathered the reins, wheeled around and drove off.

Mr. Stukely profited so much by this lesson in dumb show that he in his turn took the mute by the head, turned him towards the house, and pointed in the direction of the servants' door.

Jude bowed gruffly and went in.

Then Mr. Stukely returned to the old drawing-room, and reported that the carriage had been sent back.

"Then she means to stay with us," said Miss Nelly, with an involuntary sigh.

Mr. Stukely nodded.

Mr. Morley arose to take leave.

"Oh no! please don't go yet a while, Mr. Morley. sir; your call was such a providential one that I hope you will stay longer," pleaded Mr. Stukely, with earnest sincerity in every lineament of his honest face.

"Yes, stop to dinner, Mr. Morley, *do;* it will be on the table in fifteen minutes. And James being at home all day to-day makes it a sort of family holiday with us," said Miss Nelly, cheerfully.

"And then the arrival of my only mother makes it a kind of family festival also," added Mr. Stukely, with a spasmodic smile.

And in this and in similar expressions used by the poor fellow there was no intentional hypocrisy, but an insane effort to feel as he spoke, and as he was convinced it was his duty to feel towards his mother.

And Mr. Morley, who had a vague notion that his presence at the feast might be really useful as well as desirable, bowed, thanked his host and hostess, said he thought he would stop, and resumed his seat.

Miss Nelly, who had hushed the baby to sleep, now laid it in the cradle and went out to dish up the dinner.

She was such a good little housekeeper that company could not well take her by surprise. She had always a store of cakes, preserves and sweetmeats to improvise a delicate dessert, upon an emergency.

Her little maid came down to help her. And when the table was quite ready, Patty was sent back to summon her new old mistress to dinner. And Miss Nelly herself returned to the drawing-room, to await Mrs. Llewellyn's coming.

Mrs. Llewellyn sailed into the old drawing-room, under protest.

"Will you give Miss Nelly your arm, if you please, Mr. Morley," said James Stukely, as he offered his own to his mother, and led the way to the dinner-table.

Little Patty, with a clean apron on, and a bright tray in her hand, stood ready to wait on the company of four.

Miss Nelly sat at the head of the table; Mr. Stukely at the foot; Mr. Morley on the right hand; and Mrs. Llewellyn on the left.

Mrs. Llewellyn, with her air of haughty coldness, was a sufficient kill-joy to the feast. But if her dark thoughts could have been guessed, no Insurance Company, at any premium, would have insured Miss Nelly's life.

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE MUTE'S REVENGE.

Oh, that the slave had forty thousand lives!
One is too poor, too weak for my revenge!—*Othello.*

To death allegiance! Vows to the blackest demon!
Conscience and grace to the profoundest pit!
I dare perdition! To this point I stand—
That both the worlds I give to negligence.
Let come what comes, only I'll be revenged!—*Hamlet.*

Mrs. Jay Llewellyn took up her abode at Forest Lodge. This wicked woman was fearfully changed within the last few years of her bad life. Evil passions had ploughed more furrows in her face than the unaided hand of time could ever have traced there. Her once night-

black hair was rusty and streaked with coarse gray threads that gave it a grizzled and piebald appearance. Her skin was yellow and shrunken, her eyes red and sunken, her cheeks hollow, her hooked nose and chin were inclined to meet over the ruins of the fallen mouth. Yet, in all this, there was not the slightest indication of the approaching infirmities of age; her form was commanding, her movements energetic, and her voice decided. And, doubtless, had Mrs. Llewellyn been in fashionable society, art would have been made to assist nature, and the dentist, the hair-dresser, and the enameller would have been called in to rebuild the ruins of her beauty. But in the retired home of her despised son and hated daughter-in-law, she did not, probably, think it worth while to go to trouble and expense in repairing the dilapidations of her person.

Her presence in the house was an awful visitation to the young couple, who, nevertheless, honestly strove to do their difficult duty by her.

She treated her son with the utmost contempt, as the "poor, hen-pecked fool," that she did not scruple to call him.

She never deigned to speak to her daughter-in-law, unless to demand some service of her, and then she spoke in a tone of insolent hauteur such as no true gentlewoman would use, in addressing her lowest menial under any circumstances.

And she never even passed the little children without giving "the brats" as she called them, a shove with her foot or hand, and making them cry with pain, or fright, or both. But this did not happen very often, as the little ones were more afraid of her than of the biggest dog or blackest bull of their acquaintance, and, upon her appearance, immediately ran into shelter.

And because this woman was her husband's mother, and because she was old, the young wife bore all this from her, as she would not have borne it from any other human being.

It was only when the children were kicked or struck that their mother broke out, and gave Mrs. Llewellyn what she called "a good blowing up"—a gift that the lady never stopped to accept, as, on these occasions, she always marched off to her room with an assumption of scorn too deep for words.

At such times, Mr. Stukely was utterly miserable, living in constant dread that (to use his own words) "They should come to blows, and do each other a deadly mischief."

Little Patty also lived in mortal terror of this formidable inmate, and she whispered to her only confidantes—the cow she milked and the chickens she fed—that she believed "her new old mistress was the devil's own grandmother."

And all the family secretly prayed for a deliverance and hoped for a change, and felt that if that change should be, for Mrs. Llewellyn, the last great one of death, they would not be utterly and everlastingly inconsolable.

The huge deaf-mute was also a great inconvenience in the house. In the first place, the monster required as much food as a boa-constrictor, and thus doubled the labor as well as the expense of the culinary department. And in the second place, he was a perpetual terror to the little children, who always screamed at the sight of him, and to poor Patty, who whispered confidentially to the cow she was milking:

"I tell you what, Crumpie, if the new old missus is the devil's grandmother, the black man is the devil himself."

Mr. Stukely had always been used to the creature, and therefore did not fear him.

And Miss Nelly not only did not fear him, but she went so far as to pity him.

"Poor fellow! to be quite deaf and dumb and almost idiotic! what a combination of misfortunes!"

And so Miss Nelly was very kind to him.

And the monster, who returned the fear and horror of others with hatred and contempt, repaid the pity and

kindness of Miss Nelly with something like gratitude and devotion.

His own mistress had changed to him. She was the sort of demon who, when convenient, would betray her own confederate or break her own tool. The deaf-mute was no longer useful to her; and she was casting about in her mind how to get rid of him, or make money by him. And he was cunning enough to suspect this. And he took to watching her.

As it afterwards appeared, he had a double motive for doing this; his own interest and Miss Nelly's safety.

Events soon showed that such watchfulness was necessary.

Uninvited, the deaf-mute had assumed the duty of waiting on his mistress at the table.

On one occasion there had been a violent collision between Mrs. Llewellyn and Miss Nelly. Mrs. Llewellyn had spurned one of the children with her foot and sent it rolling and screaming over the floor.

And Miss Nelly, picking up the bruised and frightened child, had threatened Mrs. Llewellyn with a constable, and with expulsion from the house.

And the lady—scornful, arrogant and defiant—had retired to her own room.

Something in the dark face of the woman whose black thoughts he knew so well how to read, had raised the suspicions of the deaf-mute, and he crept after his mistress, and unseen by her watched all her motions.

Late in the afternoon he saw her go into the drawing-room, when there was no one else present; he saw her hover over the tea-table, and then sit down near one of the windows as with the intention of remaining there until tea should be brought in.

Presently Miss Nelly made her appearance. She was soon followed by Mr. Stukely.

Without looking towards the window at which Mrs.

Llewellyn sat, Miss Nelly rang for tea, and took her seat at the head of the table.

Patty brought in the urn. And then the deaf-mute stole out of his concealment, and took his place at the back of Miss Nelly's chair, apparently to be at hand to wait on her.

Mr. Stukely went dutifully up to his mother, and gave her his arm to the table.

Miss Nelly poured out the tea, and the deaf-mute handed it around.

Then she poured out her own tea. She always drank from a little bit of a white cup, much smaller, but no finer than those served to others.

The deaf-mute hastily sat down Mr. Stukely's cup, and hurried around to the side of Miss Nelly, in time to arrest her hand just as she was raising her own cup to her lips. With all the force of a dumb, intensely struggling soul in his face, he looked at Miss Nelly, took the cup from her hand, and went and emptied its contents out of the window. Then, amid the surprise of all present, he washed the cup carefully with hot water from the tea-kettle, wiped it with his napkin, and with the same intense effort of intelligence working in his dark features, he placed it in her hands, bowed deeply, and retired behind her chair just in time to miss the glare of hate with which his mistress honored him.

Miss Nelly stared.

"I wonder what is the meaning of this! I wish he could hear my question, and speak and answer it."

"Extraordinary!" exclaimed Mr. Stukely, who, with open mouth and eyes, had watched the whole proceeding. "What was that for?"

"One fool asks the reason of another fool's folly!" cried Mrs. Llewellyn, with a scornful laugh, as she rose from the table and left the room.

Soon after a summons came for the deaf-mute to attend

The woman was pacing the floor with long, slow strides, like those of a man. She stopped as her minister of evil entered. She went and closed the door, and locked it. Then she turned to him with a dark frown, and spelled the question:

"What do you mean?"

In the same manner he answered:

"I won't have it!" and emphasized his words by a defiant look and gesture.

"Have what, you idiot?" questioned his mistress.

"I won't have her poisoned!"

"Take care!"

"I shall—of her."

"Do you mean to oppose me?"

"Yes, I do."

"How dare you, you villain?"

"Because I love her, and I don't fear you."

"What!"

"She is good to me, who never did her any service. You are bad to me, who have steeped my soul in crime for your sake!"

"What do you mean, you ingrate?"

"You are planning to get rid of me, now that I can be of no further use to you."

"Insolent!"

"Yes!" spelt the mute, making his fingers move so swiftly that nothing but the accustomed eyes of his mistress could have followed their convolutions. "Yes! when I was in foreign countries I might have escaped from you and been free! But I was a faithful fool, and followed you into bondage again!"

"You could not have done better. With your infirmity you would have starved in foreign lands," answered the lady.

"It was not *that* prevented me; it was fidelity to *you!* And you repay it with treachery!"

"Treachery! you impudent——" exclaimed the lady, forgetting herself.

"Yes," continued the mute, spelling rapidly—for he divined by the motion of her lips something of what she had said—"yes, you want to get rid of me; you want to sell me to servitude! I saw you go to the trader and bargain with him the other day."

"Oh! a spy, are you? Very well, it is *time* to get rid of you."

"Take care!"

"Of what, you insolent wretch?"

"Of me! You are in my power. I know whose hand held the musket that killed the doctor!" swiftly spelt the dark fingers.

The bold woman shrunk back appalled for an instant, and then she laughed scornfully, and answered:

"If you were telling the truth you could not prove it. You could not make yourself understood by anybody but me, your mistress, who taught you the alphabet that *you* cannot teach to another."

A dark scowl lowered over the face of the mute.

Well would it have been for the wretched woman had she read it aright She saw only in the black, tempestuous countenance baffled cunning and bitter disappointment. She saw not the suppressed rage and intense malignity. She saw no death-warrant there.

Thus mistaking him, she ordered him at his peril never to intervene between her and her victim again, and sent him away with a smile of diabolical triumph.

In the course of the next afternoon, Mrs. Llewellyn ordered the deaf-mute to get the pony-carriage that she had purchased for her own use ready to take her to town.

When it was announced as at the door, she came out and entered it alone to drive herself into the village, leaving, as she supposed, the deaf-mute at home.

She drove into Rogues' Harbor, and straight to the quar-

ters of a slave-factor, who was then engaged in purchasing slaves and shipping them for the New Orleans market.

The lady, on sending in her card, was admitted at once to the office of the factor, who arose and offered her a chair.

When she was seated, he turned to her and said:

"Well, madam, have you decided to accept my offer for the man?"

"I have, because he troubles me; but five hundred dollars is a ridiculously low sum for a negro of his sound health and powerful frame."

"But his infirmity, madam, lessens his value."

"On the contrary, I think it increases it. He cannot play at eavesdropping or carrying tales."

At this point of the conversation, as if in ironical comment upon her words, a dark face appeared at the outer window of the office for an instant and vanished before either Mathias the factor or Mrs. Llewellyn perceived it.

"And then," said the factor, continuing the conversation, "he is no longer a young man."

"Nor an old one. He is in the prime of life."

"Yet, ten years younger he would have been worth more."

"You need not take the trouble to depreciate the property, since I have said that I will take the sum that you offer."

"And will you close the bargain now?"

"I will; and deliver the man up to-morrow morning."

"Then I have the money ready to pay over and the bill of sale ready to be signed in my desk."

"Bring them out."

The factor unlocked his desk and put his head under the lid for a few minutes, while he searched for the money and the document of which he had spoken.

And again that dark face appeared at the window behind Mrs. Llewellyn, and vanished before it could be perceived.

"Here, madam, are the notes. Count them, if you please, and see if they are right," said the factor.

"Five one hundred dollar notes. Easily reckoned and quite correct," said the lady, telling over the bills.

"And now, madam, here is the bill of sale for your signature," said the factor, laying the document before her.

She signed and handed it to him, and then put up her money in her pocket-book. But she failed to see the dark face that once more scowled through the window behind her back for a moment and then disappeared.

The face appeared there no more. The owner of the face jumped down, went around to the front of the house, and stopped where the pony-wagon was standing. He took up one of the fore-feet of the pony, and selecting a small sharp pebble, pushed it in between the shoe and the foot at a tender place, where it would be sure very soon to become extremely painful. Having done this, the deaf-mute—for, of course, the horse-lamer was himself and no other—started for the road home. After going a little way into the pine woods, he left the road and plunged into the thicket, disinterred a revolver from a heap of dried leaves under which it lay buried, examined its load and priming, and, seeing that it was all right, hid it in his bosom and returned to the neighborhood of the road. He did not go upon the road, but kept in the thicket skirting its edge.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Llewellyn concluded her business with the factor and arose to take leave.

"The property can be delivered to you at any time," said Mrs. Llewellyn, "either to-night or to-morrow morning. You may come out with me now, if you like, and take possession of him."

"Thank you, madam; but I think I will not attempt to come out to-night. I expect some parties here who have slaves to dispose of But early to-morrow morning, as you first proposed, I will wait upon you at Forest Lodge for the purpose of claiming my purchase."

"That will do, then," said Mrs. Llewellyn, with a short, haughty nod, as she turned to leave the office.

"Pardon me, madam; allow me," said the factor. And he officiously escorted the lady to her pony-carriage and put her into it.

She thanked him and started the horse.

The sun was near its setting, but she thought she had plenty of time to get home before dark.

For some ten or fifteen minutes every thing went well enough; but presently the pony fell lame and began to limp, to go slower, and then stopped short. She urged him on by voice and whip, and he went on painfully a little longer, and then stopped again. She bore with him a few minutes and then goaded him on to another effort. And he limped along for a few more rods and then stopped once for all, and refused for any amount of beating to budge. Apparently he had decided that he could bear the pain of the blows better than he could bear the pain of travelling with his sore foot.

The affair now became very serious. The sun had set; the short autumn twilight was swiftly settling into darkness; and she was in the loneliest part of the lonely road through the pine woods.

"The horse has fallen lame. It is very strange. He was all right when I started with him this afternoon," she said, as she jumped from the chaise and came around in front of the horse, and lifted up the lame foot to see what was the cause of the lameness.

At that moment a shadow, a weight, a heat, a sense of oppression, and a sound of heavy breathing behind her, caused her to raise her head and look around.

And there, like a monstrous bird of prey hovering over her, stood the deaf-mute.

No presentiment warned the doomed woman of her impending fate.

On the contrary, she arose from her stooping position,

with a look of relief, exclaiming aloud, as if he could have heard her:

"Oh, you here! That is fortunate!" Then she rapidly spelt upon her fingers the order:

"Stoop down and see what is the matter with my pony's foot! He has fallen suddenly lame."

All this time she had not looked into the mute's face.

If she had!

"Stoop down, I say, and see what has happened to my pony's foot!" she repeated.

For all answer he touched her sharply on the shoulder, and made her glance up at him.

She shrieked and drew back, appalled by his look of diabolical ferocity.

"What do you mean?" she faltered.

He raised his huge black hand and spelt the question:

"Do you know what place is this?"

She knew too well, but in the overwhelming terror that had taken possession of her guilty soul she could not answer. The mute went on spelling:

"It is the dark and bloody ground where the good doctor was murdered. I have chosen it as the place of execution for his murderess." And as he concluded this fearful sentence he placed himself in the road before her.

"Let me pass, man!" she shrieked, as if he could have heard her—"Let me pass! I will walk home."

He must have understood her meaning by the motion of her lips, the expression of her face, and by her gestures; for as she attempted to push by him he grasped her shoulder with one herculean hand, while with the other he spelt the answer:

"You will never go home again! You sold me to-day to a trader. You sold yourself long ago to the devil!"

"Let me go! let me go!" shrieked the woman, struggling violently to free herself.

But the deaf-mute slid his hand from her shoulder to her

throat, tightened his grip, and shook her furiously, until he shook her out of breath and into quietness. Then he resumed his spelling:

"You bargained to deliver me to my master to-morrow morning! I have plotted to send *you* to *your* master to-night!"

"Let me go! Let me go, assassin!" shrieked the wretched woman, recovering her wind.

But again, with the huge hand that had never been taken from her throat, he shook her out of breath and into silence, and then again resumed his horrible spelling:

"Here, where you waylaid the good doctor and slew him, you shall be slain! Here, where he lay weltering in his blood, you shall lie weltering in yours! Here, where his dead body was found, your dead body shall be found!"

"Murder! murder!" shrieked the woman, regaining her wind once more.

Apparently he understood or guessed the purpose of her cry; for as soon as he had shaken her out of breath again he spelt the answer:

"Yes! that is just what I mean—murder! *You* taught me that murder was no sin! It is no sin to slay one's mortal enemy! And *you* are my mortal enemy! It is a merit to execute a criminal! And you are a criminal!"

At that moment the sound of a horse's hoofs were heard by Mrs. Llewellyn, and she resumed her shrieks of—

"Murder! Murder! Murder! Help! Help!"

The deaf-mute tightened his grasp upon her throat and shook her into silence. And then he stood still and attentive. He could not hear the sound of the horse's hoofs, of course; but, with that marvellous sense of feeling possessed by the deaf and dumb, he felt the concussion of the ground and of the air produced by the coming horse and rider, and he knew that he had no more time to play at cat and mouse with his victim.

He drew the pistol from his bosom and presented it at her head.

She saw it, shrieked for mercy, and threw up her hands before her eyes.

He fired, dropped her body, and leaped from the road into the thicket, where he hid himself.

And the horse, frightened by the report of the pistol, forgot his lameness, sprang forward and ran dragging the whole weight of the carriage over her prostrate body, as he sped on the road homewards.

The horseman, the sound of whose approaching steed had precipitated the catastrophe, seemed to have passed away in another direction.

And in the darkness and the silence of the woods no sound was heard but the groans of the dying sinner.

After nearly half an hour had passed away, and the groans had ceased, the deaf mute stole out from his concealment, glanced cautiously around, then glided to the body of his murdered mistress, and took the watch from her bosom, the purse from her pocket, and the rings from her fingers, and then spurning the still breathing frame, leapt once more from the road to the thicket, and lost himself in the depths of the forest.

CHAPTER XLV.

REMORSE.

Habitual evils change not on a sudden,
But many days must pass, and many sorrows
Poignant remorse and anguish must be felt,
And death be near, to break the stubborn will
And work a second nature in the soul,
Ere conscience can resume the sway she lost.—*Rowe.*

On that fatal day when Mrs. Llewellyn met her death, Mr. Stukely and his lively little wife, unconscious of approaching doom, sat together with their children in the old drawing-room.

Mr. Stukely was seated at his desk, puzzling his head over some account-book.

Miss Nelly was seated on the sofa, puzzling hers over a lot of very dilapidated hose.

The two little children were at the side of the cradle, prattling to their baby sister to make her smile and crow.

They were all unconscious of a mighty deliverance in the absence of Mrs. Llewellyn.

And all was so quiet in the room that they distinctly heard the distant approach of wheels.

Mr. Stukely looked up inquiringly from his account-books.

Miss Nelly raised her eyes from her work and replied to that look:

"It is Mrs. Potts' gig, I suppose; she promised to come out and take tea with us some day this week; and so she has come, I reckon."

It was indeed the gig from the Elm Tree Inn; but no round little landlady occupied it; in her stead, sat two stern-faced men, one of whom held the reins as the gig drew up at the door, while the other alighted and knocked for admittance.

Patty was heard to open the door and reply to some inaudible question of the visitor:

"Yes, sir."

And the next moment she entered the old drawing-room, announcing:

"A gempleman to see the master," and vanished.

A respectable-looking man stood bowing in her place.

Mr. Stukely and Miss Nelly arose to receive the visitor.

And the children stopped playing to put their fingers in their mouths and stare at the stranger.

"How do you do, sir? Glad to see you. Travelling through these parts, I suppose," said Mr. Stukely, advancing to welcome the visitor.

"Thank you, yes; I am down here on business. This is Forest Lodge, I presume?" inquired the stranger.

"Yes, sir, yes, Forest Lodge—'a jolly place of yore,' 'tis said; but something ails it now, according to the ballad. However, it has always a welcome for the wayfarer. Take a seat, sir," said Mr. Stukely, handing one.

"You are Mr. Llewellyn, I suppose," said the stranger, seating himself.

"No, sir, no; my name is Stukely. I am Mrs. Llewellyn's only son by my first father, sir. But she is my only mother," answered Mr Stukely.

"And this lady——?" said the stranger, inquiringly, and with a polite wave of his hand towards the young wife.

"This lady is Miss—— *Owtch!*" cried Mr. Stukely, breaking off in his reply to lift and caress his injured shin which Miss Nelly had slyly kicked as a gentle reminder.

"This lady is—?" again questioned the visitor.

"*Oome! Oh-h-h! Ah-h-h!*" groaned Mr. Stukely, ruefully, rubbing his shin. "This lady is my wife, sir. *Ah-h-h! Oh-h-h! Oome!*—Miss Nelly, my dear, the next time you give me a hint, don't do it with new walking shoes, unless I have top-boots on," he added, in a lower voice.

"I am proud to know Mrs. Stukely," said the stranger, bowing to Miss Nelly. Then turning to Mr. Stukely, who was still rubbing his shin and groaning, he added—"But my business is with Mrs. Llewellyn. I must see her immediately."

"Well, you might have done so if you had come half an hour earlier. But she has gone to town—*Oome!*—to do some important business there. *Oh-h-h!* It is a wonder you hadn't met her on the road—*Ah-h-h!*"

"A lady in a black velvet bonnet and red cashmere shawl, driving a pony-chaise alone?"

"Yes. *Oome!* Miss Nelly, you must have been iron-shod!" cried Mr. Stukely, dismally comforting his bruised shin.

"When will Mrs. Llewellyn be back?" inquired the visitor.

"*Oome!* In an hour or two, at farthest. Sit down and make yourself at home and stay to tea; and you shall see her. I know she'll be glad—*Oome!*—to see any friend of hers from town."

"Thank you, sir; I will stay, since it is absolutely necessary that I see Mrs. Llewellyn as soon as possible. Your kind invitation to tea, however, I shall be forced to decline."

"*Oome!*—Why?"

"A previous engagement makes it impossible," said the stranger, evasively.

"*Oome!*—Yes; is it so? I am sorry for that. I should be glad to have you stop. *Oome!*"

"You seem to be in pain, sir?"

"*Oome!* Yes; it was an accident. Miss Nelly—*Owtch!* don't do that again, my dear, it hurts!" cried Mr. Stukely, wincing from a second reminder—"Mrs. Stukely, I meant to say, grazed my shin. But, sir, I think you had a friend with you in the gig. Won't he come in and stop?"

"Thank you, yes. I will speak to him."

"And you would like to have your horse put up, sir?"

"Oh, no, I thank you, he will stand," said the stranger, going out.

Presently he returned again, accompanied by his "friend."

"And now, gentlemen, will you please to let me know whom I have the—the pleasure of—of—seeing?" said Mr. Stukely, politely.

"My name is Beck and my companion's is White," said the first comer.

"Glad to see you, gentlemen, both. And much obliged to you for waiting for my mother. I am sure she would be very sorry to miss any friends who came so far to call on her. *Oome!*"

Mr. Beck and Mr. White bowed gravely in reply to this remark.

And Miss Nelly went out to have candles lighted, as it was now growing dark in the old drawing-room.

Just at this moment a swift and rattling sound of hoofs and wheels was heard approaching the house, and Mr. Stukely ran out to see what was the matter.

It proved to be the horse, with the wreck of the chaise at his heels.

On seeing that, Mr. Stukely rushed back into the house, exclaiming:

"Extraordinary! Gentlemen! gentlemen! for heaven's sake give me your assistance! Here is the pony come home with the broken chaise behind him! And I feel sure he has run away and thrown my mother out!"

The strangers needed no second appeal, but immediately arose, seized their hats, and rushed out.

Meanwhile Mr. Stukely procured a lantern, lighted it, and followed them.

They all examined the chaise. It was shaken and broken all to pieces, and only held together by its iron bands. Tangled up in its fragments was Mrs. Llewellyn's veil and shawl.

"Extraordinary! Extraordinary! Gentlemen! gentlemen! we must take the lantern and go in search of her. She may be lying somewhere on the road severely hurt," said Mr. Stukely, nearly beside himself with anxiety.

The two strangers lost no time in agreeing to this measure. And while Mr. Stukely returned to the house to tell Miss Nelly what had happened, they brought their own gig around to the door.

When he came out to join them, it was agreed that he and Mr. Beck should go in the gig to search for Mrs. Llewellyn, while Mr. White should remain at Forest Lodge until their return.

It was quite dark when these adventurers started on their errand.

They were obliged to drive slowly and cautiously, and to stop frequently and examine the road before them carefully, lest they should drive over the body they had come to search for.

Just within the wood they came upon an obstacle. But when examined it proved to be a part of the pony-chaise that had been torn off by the rapid flight of the horse.

At sight of it, Mr. Stukely groaned:

"Oh, what a start and a crash it must have been! It must have nearly killed my mother! Oh, what could have caused it? He was one of the gentlest old ponies that ever was. Why, a child could have driven him."

A little deeper in the wood they were stopped by another obstruction in the road. Upon investigation, it was found to be one of the wheels of the chaise, that had been wrenched off in the mad progress of the horse.

Mr. Stukely cried:

"Oh, look here now, you know, it must have been a most horrible case of a bolting horse. But what ever could have frightened him? And I'm sure it has done for my mother."

"Oh, no, not necessarily," said Mr. Beck, consolingly. "She may have jumped out unhurt. Or, if she was thrown out, she may have escaped with little or no injury. Let us hope so, at least."

"Let us go on," said Mr. Stukely.

And on they went, for about half a mile, when they were again hindered by something lying across the road.

Mr. Stukely jumped out to examine it, and then gave forth a great howl.

"It is my mother! It is my mother, and she is dead, I am sure of it!"

Mr. Beck jumped out of the gig and turned the bull's eye of the lantern full upon the white, upturned face before them.

"Yes, you see, it is she! it is she!" cried Mr. Stukely, dancing with distress. "It is she, and I am sure she is dead!"

Beck knelt down by the body and carefully examined it, while Mr. Stukely jumped from one side of the road to the other and back again in an agony of suspense.

"No, she is not dead; and she may not be mortally injured. We must get her home immediately, and get medical attendance as soon as possible," said Beck.

"Oh, thank you for saying that. Oh, help me to put her into the gig. And I will take her home; and you, like a good fellow, go on to the village and fetch a doctor. Fetch Doctor Meadows. You will find him on Main street, opposite Mr. Lacy's shop."

"No," said Beck, reflectively—"I must not lose sight of her. She may not be seriously injured after all, and so——"

"What did you say, sir?" inquired Mr. Stukely.

"Oh, I say that *I* will take the lady back to Forest Lodge. And *you* had better go on to the village for a doctor. You will be able to get one quicker, perhaps, than I should," replied Beck, evasively.

"Oh, thank you, yes; you are very kind!" exclaimed Mr. Stukely.

"Let us put her into the gig at once. Help me to raise her tenderly; so."

And together they lifted the helpless body and laid it as easily as circumstances would permit in the gig. But as they moved it, feeble groans issued from its lips.

Beck supported it as well as he could, while he gathered the reins in his hands and prepared to start for Forest Lodge.

Mr. Stukely took the horse's head and turned it around homeward, and then he hurried on to the village, while the gig rolled on towards Forest Lodge.

In due time it drew up before the door of the old mansion house.

And Miss Nelly, who was on the watch for news, came out to see what had really happened.

"Was any one hurt?" she inquired.

"Yes, madam; the old lady appears to have been thrown out and injured, but not fatally, I hope. Mr. Stukely has gone on to the village to fetch a doctor. Will you be good enough to ask White to come here and give me a hand in lifting her out?"

"Certainly," said Miss Nelly, disappearing into the house.

The next moment White came out.

"Give us a lift here, White! I don't know but what this accident has forestalled the law," said Beck.

With a few exclamations of surprise and pity, White gave his assistance. And between him and Beck the body of the woman was lifted out and carried into the house.

Miss Nelly stood in the passage with a lighted candle waiting to receive it.

"Come after me, gentlemen," she said, "and I will show you where to lay her."

And she led the way up stairs, they following her with their burden, to a spacious front chamber, in which stood a large, four-posted bedstead.

"Lay her here," said Miss Nelly, "and leave her for the present with me and my maid."

And the men laid their burden there, and then left the room—Beck to remain on guard outside the chamber door, and White to stand sentinel before the house.

As soon as she was left alone with her guest, Miss Nelly lighted two more candles, and then rang for Patty, who almost immediately answered the summons.

And the mistress and maid went up together to the bedside to examine the condition of the insensible woman.

But at the first full view Miss Nelly shrank back in

horror, and Patty, with a scream, covered her face with her hands. Both forgot their fear and dislike of the household tyrant, and felt only compassion and anxiety for the suffering woman.

"Oh, mim, can any think be done for her?" cried Patty, from behind her hands.

"I don't know. Bring me a basin of lukewarm water, and a sponge, and several towels," replied Miss Nelly.

Patty, keeping her eyes carefully averted from the ghastly object on the bed, went on this errand.

And when she returned with the required articles, Miss Nelly commenced the work of cleansing the face, neck and bosom of the wretched woman from the clotted blood and clay that covered it.

Patty held the basin for her mistress; but she almost wrung her own head off at the same time in her efforts to avert her face from the sight of the injured woman.

When Miss Nelly had unpinned the shawl, and unhooked the dress, she found that all the linen about the breast was so saturated with blood that had clotted and stiffened, that it would be necessary to change all her clothes. But she dared not attempt to do this before the doctor's arrival, especially as upon every attempt to move her, the suffering woman, insensible to every other impression, uttered groans of agony.

So Miss Nelly stood sponging the pallid face and hands, and occasionally examining the pulse, which she feared was sinking.

At length, towards ten o'clock, the doctor's gig was heard to roll up and stop before the door.

And a few seconds after Mr. Stukely came up and knocked, and asked how his mother was, and whether the doctor might come in.

"Your mother is still unconscious. The doctor may come in, and you also, if you wish," was Miss Nelly's answer.

Accordingly Doctor Meadows and Mr. Stukely entered.

Doctor Meadows walked up to the side of his new patient, and after a single glance at her ordered every one out of the room except Miss Nelly, to give him a chance of examining the wretched woman's injuries.

Little Patty poked her basin under the bed and ran away, happy to be relieved from such horrible duty. And when she got to her kitchen, she sat down and lifted the tortoise-shell kitten to her knee, and told it in confidence that it was her opinion that the devil had killed his grandmother.

Mr. Stukely lingered a little longer in the room, pressing the question:

"Will she live? oh! doctor, will she live?"

"How can I tell? I must see to her injuries first," answered blunt Doctor Meadows.

And he proceeded ruthlessly to cut away the rich black satin and fine linen and lace that covered Mrs. Llewellyn's bust, and could not otherwise be removed.

And Mr. Stukely was forced to go away with the answer he had received.

Outside the door he noticed, for the first time, Beck, on guard. He had passed him twice before on that very landing without seeing him. Now he stopped and spoke to him:

"You are waiting here, I suppose, to see if you can be of any use? How very good of you! How much I thank you! Give me your hand!"

The man on guard gave his hand gruffly enough; and when Mr. Stukely had well shaken it, and released it, and passed on his way down stairs, he (Beck) grunted, shook his head, and muttered something about "feeling like a blamed mean hypocrite."

Mr. Stukely went down stairs, declined the supper that little Patty offered him neatly arranged upon a tray, and occupied himself by walking up and down the old drawing-room, until he was interrupted by the entrance of Miss Nelly.

"Will she live?" he inquired, wheeling around to meet her.

"The doctor doesn't know yet, dear. Let us hope for the best. I have come down here with a note from the doctor to his assistant. He wants his assistant to come out immediately, and bring a certain set of instruments with him. Where is the deaf mute? If he can neither speak nor hear I can make him understand where to take this note by signs. Will you look him up?"

"Yes," said Mr. Stukely, going off like a shaft from a bow.

And the deaf-mute was sought everywhere—in the house, kitchen, cellar, stables, wood-shed, dog-kennels, garden, orchard, and home woods—but could be found nowhere.

At the end of the fruitless search for the deaf-mute, Mr. Stukely came in and said:

"He is not anywhere on the premises; but I will take the note, and the doctor's gig and horse, and will go myself and fetch the assistant and the instruments."

And without waiting to find his gloves, and picking up the first hat that came to hand, Mr. Stukely rushed out, jumped into the gig, and started the doctor's sober Rosinante at a pace that nearly astonished his senses out of him.

Miss Nelly returned to the chamber of impending death, and reported to "the surgeon in charge."

And two hours of intense anxiety passed. And then the doctor's gig was heard rattling at a furious pace up to the door.

And in a few seconds Mr. Stukely jumped up the stairs, half-a-dozen steps at a time, and landed in the room, with his incessant question:

"Will she live?"

"I do not know," answered the doctor. "Have you brought my assistant?"

"Yes."

"Send him up!"

"Tet—tell me what you are going to do, doctor?"

"I am going to perform an operation called trepanning. If it succeeds she will recover her consciousness, and she may live. If it fails, she will die."

"Bub—but if there is a risk, why perform it at all?" stammered Mr. Stukely.

"Because if I do not she will *certainly* die, and in a state of unconsciousness, also. This operation will afford her the only possible chance of life. The skull is fractured——"

"Oh!" groaned Mr. Stukely.

"And a portion of it presses upon the brain. If it is lifted it will *certainly* restore her to consciousness. And it *may* save her life. If it is not lifted, as I said before, she must surely die in a few hours, and in a state of unconsciousness."

"Go on, doctor! Go on and do it, then! I will say no more! Oh, Lor! Oh, dear! Extraordinary!"

"I must add, that whether this lady's life is saved or not, it is very necessary to the ends of justice that her consciousness should be restored."

"All right! do as you think best! Oh, Lor! Oh, dear! Extraordinary!" said Mr. Stukely, as he left the room.

At the door he again stared on finding the man on guard.

"*You* here yet? Well, now, that's what I call sticking to a fellow in his trouble! Give us your hand again, old boy!"

And the "old boy" gave his hand again as gruffly as before, and when the ceremony was over growled as deeply as before about feeling like a "mean cuss of a hypocrite."

Presently the doctor's assistant, young Mr. Hare, with a case of instruments in his hand, came up stairs and entered the room.

And another hour of intense anxiety followed. At the end of this time the doctor, leaving his assistant watching over the patient, came out.

Beck, still on guard at the door, laid hold of him, stopped him, and questioned him.

"Doctor, excuse me; but I wish to ask you of the condition of your patient."

"And doctors are not accustomed, sir, to express their opinions lightly to any curious gentleman that may stop to inquire," gravely replied Meadows.

"You will excuse me, and give me a satisfactory answer, when I state to you my reasons for making the inquiry."

"Be quick, then, for I am in a hurry."

"I will. I came down to this place this afternoon, sir, armed with a warrant for the arrest of this lady who is your patient."

The doctor started back and gazed in astonishment at the speaker, who calmly continued:

"This warrant is based upon charges of the very gravest nature, not necessary to specify here. The lady has been a fugitive from justice for several years, and she only lately ventured to return to the country. We have tracked her down here; and have come to arrest her. Her unfortunate son knows nothing of our errand. We have forborne, as long as possible, to wound his feelings. Now what I wish to ask you is, whether this lady can be arrested in her present state?"

"Most assuredly not! To attempt to move her in her present condition would cause her instant death."

"Then, doctor, how long is she likely to lie in this state?"

"As it is an official question I will answer it professionally. She may die within an hour from this moment, or she may linger for several days and die at the end of that time."

"You consider her speedy death inevitable."

"As far as mere human foresight and medical science and experience instruct me, I *do*."

"Then if you will give me a certificate to that effect I will go. And that poor, simple young man need never know the purpose of my visit here."

"I will give you my certificate with pleasure. But I advise you not to leave the neighborhood just yet."

"Why, if you please, sir?"

"Because you may find work to do here still. You belong to the detective police force, I suppose."

"Yes, sir."

"Then it may concern you to know that this lady's death is not a case of accident, but of———assassination."

"'Assassination!'" re-echoed the policeman. And it was now *his* turn to be thunderstruck.

"Yes. But say nothing of this at present to the family. Stay where you are. I will give you all the information I possess, and also certain clues that will lead you to new discoveries. Therefore remain where you are."

"I will observe your directions in all things, sir," said the policeman.

And the doctor went down stairs into the old drawing-room, where he found Mr. Stukely, pacing distractedly up and down.

"*Will* she live?" reiterated Mr. Stukely—the old question.

"While there is life there is hope," replied the doctor, using the formula in such cases made and provided.

"Oh, that means there is scarcely any hope at all!" said Mrs. Llewellyn's son.

"The operation was successful, in so far as it restored her consciousness. She is now sleeping. When she awakes I shall be able to give a more decided opinion. I have left Hare with her."

"Oh! are you not going to stay yourself?"

"No, I cannot; I have a case that I must see to-night. But I will be here early in the morning."

"Doctor, I am a poor, weak, sinful man; but withal I am a God-fearing one. And now I ask you as a Christian, who appreciates the worth of an immortal soul—Is it not advisable that I should have a minister of the gospel in the house, ready to attend my mother when she awakes?"

"Yes."

"You will pass Mr. Morley's house on your way home. Late as it is, I must beg you to try to see him; and if you really think there is any serious danger of—of—any thing happening to-night, ask him to come out at once and take a bed with us."

"I will, certainly," said Doctor Meadows.

And with a bow he went away.

Mr. Stukely went up stairs to the door of the sick-room. There he found Beck still stationed.

"Oh, look here, now, my dear fellow! really you know you are making a martyr of yourself! Don't do it. I don't think there is the least chance of your being at all useful to us in this awful crisis. And then you have had nothing to eat. Go down, now, and Miss Nelly—I mean Mrs. Stukely, and I thank goodness she isn't here to give me one of her reminders—will set some supper before you, and show you where you are to sleep, for of course you will not think of leaving us at this hour of the night," said Mr. Stukely, kindly.

"No, thank you, I shall remain, with your permission," said Beck, and with a short nod he availed himself of Mr. Stukely's invitation, and went below stairs to find supper.

Mr. Stukely slipped into the sick-room, and stole on tip-toes up to the bed.

Miss Nelly was seated watching on one side of it, and the young medical student on the other.

The patient was sleeping calmly.

Mr. Stukely bent over and gazed upon the pallid face and bandaged head, until the tears began to roll down his cheeks. Evil as this woman might have been, she was his mother, and she loved him after her own fashion. And he knew not the extent of her wickedness; and of all the human race, he was, perhaps, the only one in the world who loved her.

He turned weeping away from her, and beckoned young Hare to follow him to a distant window.

"Will she live?" inquired Mr. Stukely, for perhaps the hundred and fiftieth time.

"While there is life there is——"

"Oh, bosh! that is what you all say. I wish to know what the chances are. Where is she hurt?"

"In the head and in the chest. But excuse me, I must return to the bedside of my patient. I must watch for the slightest changes in her condition."

"Thank you! Oh, thank you for your attention! I am not a rich man; but if by any extra care you can save her life, I will give you all the money I have in the world," said Mr. Stukely, earnestly.

"I am obliged to you, sir; but I will do my best without that. Besides, I am not a practitioner, sir; and so I cannot even take a fee," said the young man, as he moved off towards his patient.

Mr. Stukely went down stairs and spent the night, as Little Patty said, walking about the house "like a Jew without a jacket."

Miss Nelly and Mr. Hare watched by the patient all the night through.

And not until the next morning did the Reverend Mr. Morley arrive. With him came Doctor Meadows.

Both gentlemen were very anxious to learn the condition of the patient, and were pleased to hear that she had passed a quiet night.

"I should have come last evening, but I was from home when the doctor came, having been called to perform the funeral services of a parishioner living at a distance, and at whose house I passed the night. I was on my way home this morning when I met Doctor Meadows coming here. And at his instance I turned my horse's head to accompany him," explained Mr. Morley.

At this moment Miss Nelly ran lightly down the stairs

to the hall, where the gentlemen stood hanging up their hats.

"Oh, Doctor, I am so glad that you have come! so glad! And you, too, Mr. Morley! how providential that you should be here!" exclaimed Miss Nelly, breathlessly. And yet her looks and manner expressed any thing else than joy and gladness; they were full of fear and horror.

"How is our patient?" inquired Doctor Meadows.

"She is awake and conscious; and she seems to suffer horribly; and as much from the mind as the body, I fear," said the young woman.

"Mr. Morley, if you will be so good as to wait in the parlor, while I go up and examine my patient, I will soon inform you whether she is in a proper condition to receive your visit," said Doctor Meadows.

The clergyman bowed slightly, and followed Mr. Stukely into the best parlor; while Doctor Meadows followed Miss Nelly up stairs into the sick-room.

The room was half darkened; yet even in that semi-obscurity two burning black eyes seemed to shine forth with a phosphoric light from the ghastly face upon the pillow, as the doctor approached the bed.

"Shall I die?" hissed a voice from those pallid lips.

"While there is life——"

"Rubbish! I did not ask you for your formula. I want the truth."

The voice in which she spoke these words was strange and unnatural. It was a hissing whisper, enunciated with difficulty, and yet distinctly audible even at a great distance. And the look with which she accompanied these words was so searching, so imperative, so compelling, that the doctor was forced to answer:

"The issues of life and death are in the hands of Divine Providence."

"I understand what that means. How much time have I?"

"That I cannot tell you. You may live for days; you may even recover. Keep up your spirits; you are a lady of strong will; to *will* is often to live," said the doctor.

The hissing voice replied:

"What! with *this*, and with *this!*" And she feebly struck her head, and tore at her breast. "You know better! Both are mortal."

And she writhed on her bed, and an expression of horror convulsed her face.

The near approach of death in most cases softens the hardest criminal, bends the most stubborn will, and brings the most incurable moral maniac to reason.

The doctor poured out a composing draught, raised her head, and placed it to her lips, saying:

"Try to be composed; much depends upon quietness."

"Doctor," said the dying woman, as soon as her head rested again upon the pillow, "you are a man of strong mind not likely to be bound by traditions or enslaved by dogmas. What say you—Do you believe in a future state of existence?"

"As firmly as I believe in this present one," gravely replied the doctor.

Silence—an awful silence—fell between them for a few minutes, and then she spoke:

"You will not tell me whether I shall live or die; or, if I am to die, how long I have to live. But this I will tell you: that it is absolutely necessary I should see a justice of the peace before I die."

He did not reply immediately; when he did it was to say:

"The Reverend Mr. Morley is in the commission of the peace. He is down stairs. Will you see him?"

"Yes; I will. But first give me something to strengthen and quiet me, if only for a few moments."

The doctor complied with her request, and then he went down stairs to seek the clergyman.

"How is your patient?" inquired Mr. Morley.

"She is dying. And she needs now only a physician of the soul. She is suffering horrible mental torture, from some hidden cause. She is a woman with nerves of steel and heart of adamant; so she does not prate of her remorse; yet I can see that she is suffering agony from that source. Go to her; she wishes to see you."

Mr. Morley immediately arose and hurried up into the chamber of death.

The same burning black, phosphorescent eyes shining through the obscurity of the room as from some strange, unnatural lurid light of their own, drew him towards the bed.

"You are the Reverend Mr. Morley," said the dying woman, in the same hissing whisper.

"I am; and I am very sorry to see you suffering so much," said the old man, gently.

"Oh! I remember your voice now. You are the minister who dined with us on the first day of my arrival here."

"Yes."

"Are you a magistrate also?"

"I am; for the lack of a better one."

Silence fell between them for a few moments, and then she inquired:

"Are we alone?"

"No. Mr. Hare and Mrs. Stukely are in the room."

"Send them out. Our interview must be a private one."

Mr. Morley got up to do so; but the hissing whisper had reached Miss Nelly's ears, and she did not wait for the parson. Touching Mr. Hare on the shoulder to call his attention, she said:

"Come—come down stairs and get some breakfast while Mr. Morley remains with our patient."

And the young medical student, worn out with watching and as hungry as his class are prone to be, gladly followed his hostess from the room.

Mr. Morley closed the door behind them, and thus shut them out from the knowledge of what passed within.

The particulars of that interview did not transpire for some time.

One, two, three hours passed, and still the clergyman remained shut up in the room with the dying woman.

At the end of that time a bell rang, and Miss Nelly ran up stairs to answer it.

She opened the door suddenly and went in.

The patient was lying with her eyes fixed wildly on the face of the minister. Mr. Morley had just risen from a little table that stood by the bedside with writing materials upon it. He held in his hand a thick folded manuscript, which he carefully deposited in the breast-pocket of his coat. Then he took from the table a long folded paper, which he retained as he turned to take leave of his penitent.

"*Remember!*" said the dying woman—"that is not to be delivered until I am laid in the earth."

"I will remember," replied the minister, very solemnly; "and in the meantime think you of your immortal soul; of the Redeemer's boundless love and the Father's infinite mercy. Pray for yourself; and I also will continue to pray for you!" So saying the minister bowed to Miss Nelly, left the patient in her charge, and passed from the room.

In the hall below he met the detective Beck.

"Your prisoner is dying. Your responsibility, as far as she is concerned, is over. But take this warrant; read it if you like; and place it in the hands of one of our county constables; and though you cannot take an official part in making the arrest, I ask as a favor that you will give our officers the benefit of your great skill and experience in tracking the criminal."

"I will cheerfully give all the assistance in my power while I remain in the neighborhood, where I shall be obliged to stay until the fate of this unfortunate woman is

certainly decided," said Beck, as he took the warrant and opened it for the purpose of reading it.

"And one warning in your ear. It is not necessary, and by no means desirable, that this unhappy family should know any thing about the matter at the present stage of affairs. They have now, perhaps, as much trouble as they can well bear. It will be time enough to enlighten them when the criminal is taken," said the minister.

"I understand you, sir; and I agree with you fully," replied Beck.

While they spoke, loud cries from Miss Nelly startled the whole household.

Mr. Morley and Beck, followed by every one in the house, ran up stairs and into the sick-room, to see what the matter could be.

They found Miss Nelly up on the bed, supporting in her arms the form of Mrs. Llewellyn, who was in her last death-throes. Her wounds had commenced bleeding inwardly, and she was suffocating in the hemorrhage.

As they hurried to the bedside, Miss Nelly laid her burden gently back upon the pillow, whispering:

"She is gone; may Heaven have mercy on her!"

CHAPTER XLVI.

LILY MAY'S LETTER.

Had it pleased Heaven
To try me with affliction; had He rained
All kinds of sores and shames on my bare head;
Steeped me in poverty to the very lips;
Given to captivity me and my utmost hopes;
I should have found in some part of my soul
A drop of patience. . . . . .
But here where I have garnered up my heart,
Where either I must live or bear no life.—*Shakspeare.*

On the morning of Lily May's flight, Lily Gay slept later than usual. The reason was obvious. She had watched

with her distressed sister until long after midnight, and she made up for that unusual vigilance by sleeping longer in the morning.

When at length she awoke, it was with a confused and troubled recollection of the events of the previous day, in which sympathy with Lily May and indignation against her assailant were equally balanced.

She missed her companion from her side; but as she saw at once by the broad daylight which made its way even through the closed Venetian shutters and the dropped lace curtains, how late it was, she felt no misgiving at the absence of Lily May. She merely supposed that her sister had awakened and arisen at her usual hour.

"Poor child! I do not think she slept much during the night. I wish, though, she had waked me when she got up," said Lily Gay to herself, as she got out of bed and began to dress herself.

She was very impatient to rejoin Lily May, so she made very quick work with her sponge-bath and her hair-braiding.

Then she slipped on her blue gingham wrapper and ran down stairs.

Owen sat reading the morning paper by one of the front windows.

The breakfast-table stood ready in the middle of the room.

The hands of the clock on the mantel-piece pointed to half-past nine.

As Lily Gay entered, Owen looked up from his paper.

"Oh, Owen," she said, with a compunctious glance at the clock, "I have kept you waiting so late! I am very sorry."

"It does not matter, dear; but as you are down, we will have breakfast at once," he replied.

Lily Gay rang the bell, and directed Nancy to bring in

the coffee; and then she turned to Owen with another look of regret, saying:

"But to keep you so late from your business, Owen! I wish——"

"Say no more about it, Lily Gay! It is really of very little consequence. As I never was late in my life before, I can very well afford to be so, for once in a way, this morning."

"I don't know. At any rate, I don't like to think that it was through my remissness that you are late for the first time. I was going to say that I wish you had had me called."

"No; I would not have done so except upon a much greater emergency than existed. I knew that you and Lily May must have passed a disturbed night; for I heard you talking at a late hour. And I wished you to take your full rest this morning."

"That was like your kindness, Owen. But *I* was the only sluggard. Lily May was up and dressed at her usual hour, you know. And as you would not have me called, I wish you hadn't waited for me, but had taken your breakfast without me."

"Ah, little sister, you know my weakness! I would fast for hours rather than miss the pleasure of breakfasting with you and Lily May," smiled the good brother.

"Well, you *had* Lily May! Why did you not take your breakfast together, instead of waiting so long for me, to the mortification of your appetites and the neglect of your business?"

"But I *hadn't!* If she is up, she is not down; for I haven't seen or heard any thing of her this morning."

"Not seen or heard of her this morning! Oh, then, I suppose she came down the back way, and went into the garden to gather flowers for the breakfast-table! She will be here in a moment," said Lily Gay, going to the table and beginning to occupy herself with setting the dishes

in a more symmetrical order than Nancy had placed them.

"How were her spirits? Was she more cheerful when alone with you than she was when down here?" inquired Owen, anxiously.

"She was more composed; for she sat down and wrote some chapters of her story; and you know she would not have done that if her mind had not been quiet, especially as it was not a work of necessity, that she was obliged to do, but one of pure amusement. She wrote until after midnight; and it was my expostulations with her, urging her to leave off and come to bed, that you heard. But you know how it is with Lily May. When she is 'i' the vein,' as she calls it, she will write half the night."

"I must break her of that bad habit," said Owen, smiling.

At this moment Nancy entered, with the coffee-pot in one hand and a plate of muffins in the other, both of which she sat upon the table, saying:

"Well, it's my hopes; as for the futur', whoever unlocks the front door after I locks it at night will 'ither lock it again theirselves, or if they's too lazy to do it, will call me!"

"Why, Nancy, what do you mean with your talk of locking and unlocking? What has happened? Who has vexed you?" inquired Owen.

"All on you has, with your don't-carish doings!"

"But how? In what respect?"

"You know well 'nough! 'Spose I like to get up some morning with my brains blowed out, and find the house robbed and all on you dead in your beds, with nothing left to live on?"

"That would be a stupendous, an incomprehensible horror indeed!" said Owen, laughing.

"Well, you may jeer and laugh, but it is just what will happen one of these days, and *then* you'll laugh on the other side of your mouth, I reckon!"

"But what has put it into your good, thick head to predict such an awful calamity?" inquired Owen.

"You know well 'nough."

"Indeed, I do not."

"Who lef' the front-door unlock'?"

"No one did. I was the last to retire; and before going to my room, I made my usual round of inspection to see that all was fast; and I remember perfectly well that the front-door was both locked and bolted."

"It was, was it? Well, all I know is, as I was the first one up this morning, and when I came down, the first thing I see was the front-door unlocked and unbolted! And I was so took aback, as I said to myself—'Well! some morning every one of us will get up with our brains out and the house gutted!'"

"What a horrible consummation! But, Nancy, really I do not understand about the door. I am quite certain I left it fastened. Did you examine to see if every thing was safe?"

"Yes; fortinitly every thing was safe; nobody was kilt, and nothing was stoled; no thanks to whoever left the door open last night."

"Oh, Nancy dear, never mind the door now. As every thing is safe, we need not talk any more about it; only we must be more careful another time. Now go call Lily May in to breakfast," said Lily Gay.

Nancy started to go up-stairs.

"Oh, she is not there! she is in the garden, Nancy," said Lily Gay.

"She's—*which?*" inquired the woman, hesitating and holding by the ballustrades.

"She's in the garden."

"In the garden? No, she ain't, nuther! That I'll take my davy on! There ain't nobody passed out'n this house into the garden this morning, *I* knows. The back door aint,

even been opened. I can see it from here with the bars up still—*Garden!*"

"Oh, Nancy, now I know how the front door came open. Lily May passed out of it, and around by the side gate into the garden. That is how it was. Now, go and call her; that is a good soul, and tell her we are waiting breakfast," said Lily Gay.

With a grunt of disapprobation Nancy started on this errand. But she had scarcely gone, when the door-bell rang sharply, and Owen jumped up to answer the summons.

"Who is it, Owen? Oh, I know. Certainly it is Lily May, come round to re-enter by the same way she went out, and finds herself locked out by Nancy's blundering caution. Hurry in, my dear! we have been waiting for you," said Lily Gay, without even looking up, so certain she felt of being right in her conjecture.

Not Lily May's gentle tones, however, answered her; but a cheerful, manly voice spoke, which called the rich blood into Lily Gay's cheeks. And William Spicer, junior, now grown to be a handsome young man, and a promising under-graduate of the Medical College, stood before her.

"Oh, Willie, I am so glad to see you! When did you arrive?" she inquired, rising, flushed, but happy to receive him.

"Just this moment, I may say. I left Rogues' Harbor yesterday morning; reached Baltimore last evening; took the night train north, and arrived at New York an hour ago. I came straight from the station here—that is to say, as straight as the relative position of the two points would admit of," said William Spicer, smiling.

"Then you have not breakfasted?" said Owen.

"Breakfasted!—Now, Wynne, you know very well that I understand dietetics too well to trust my health to the tender mercies of railway station caterers. *Breakfasted?* No! And I see that you have not, either; although it is

nearly ten o'clock! Pray, are you contracting lazy city habits?"

"Not exactly. Our lateness this morning is quite accidental," said Owen.

"Nancy! another cup and saucer here!—oh, I forgot, she has gone after Lily May. I will go and fetch them myself," said Lily Gay, rising from the table and running into the kitchen.

"How is your friend Lily May?" inquired William Spicer.

"She is quite well! She has gone into the garden, I believe, to gather the usual morning bouquet, with which she delights to deck the breakfast table. You are here for the winter?"

"Yes. This is the last course of lectures I shall be called upon to attend. I hope to graduate with some honor in the spring."

"Success to you! The medical profession, in the vast benefits it confers upon society, is second to none, and equalled by but one."

While the young men thus conversed, they were interrupted by the entrance of Lily Gay with a fresh cup and saucer and plate; and by Nancy, with the exclamation—

"I told you so! She ain't in the garden!—Lor!—why if that ain't Master William! How do you do, sir! And how did you leave all the old folks at Rogue?"

"Very well, I thank you, Nancy! How are you?" returned the young man, cordially, extending his hand to the faithful old woman.

"Middling, Master William, honey; just middling, and no more."

"Nancy, did you say Lily May was not in the garden?" inquired Lily Gay.

"No! I told you so before! I knowed she wasn't. I went to look there for her, and now I have proved it."

"Then she must be in some of the rooms up stairs. Go

and look for her, Nancy, and tell her we are at breakfast. And Owen, dear, don't wait any longer; sit down. Willie must want his breakfast. And Lily May will be here by the time I pour out the coffee. Willie, it is *coffee*, mind you, not a mixture of burnt rye, chickory and dandelion! We buy it in the grain, and toast and grind it ourselves. Sit down," said Lily Gay, cheerfully, as her white hands fluttered among the tea-cups and saucers, tinkling silver teaspoons, and dropping sugar, and pouring cream to enrich the exhilarating morning beverage.

She had served the coffee to each one, and they were quaffing it with great relish, when Nancy re-entered the room, saying:

"She ain't up stairs nowhere! nowhere at all!"

"Well now, that is very odd! Did you look in all the rooms, Nancy?" inquired Lily Gay.

"In every singly one, and even in the clothes-closets."

"Let me look! Excuse me, Willie. Excuse me, Owen. I will be back in one moment," said Lily Gay, starting away from the table, and running up the stairs.

"Nancy," said Owen, uneasily, "have you not seen her this morning?"

"Not a singly sign of her! She ain't been down stairs since I've been up, and that I'll take my davy of!"

The offices of hospitality claimed Owen's attention. He helped the traveller to a hot muffin, a rasher of bacon, a boiled egg, the castors, etc., and then turned his face towards the door, listening and waiting for the return of his sister.

William Spicer, junior, in an interval of cramming himself, noticed this manner of his friend, and as soon as he had swallowed, inquired:

"I hope there is no reason to be uneasy?"

"Oh, no," answered Owen, smiling, "only it is unusual for Lily May to be so late."

While he spoke Lily Gay entered the room in excitement, exclaiming:

"Owen, she is not anywhere in the house! She has certainly gone out; because her school-bonnet and mantle and satchel have gone too!"

"How strange! But don't be frightened; she may have gone out on some little errand of her own and been detained longer than she expected to be," said Owen.

"Oh, yes!" exclaimed Lily Gay, brightening up—"I know now, just where she has gone! She has gone to the school to get the books that we left behind! And that is the reason why she went so early and took her satchel."

"How?"

"Oh, you see, she went early so as to get there before the pupils assembled and the school commenced. And she took the satchel to bring the books in."

"I should be sorry if I thought she had gone to the school. The place where she received so great——" began Owen, but recollecting that Willie Spicer was present, and was ignorant of what had happened on the previous day, he suddenly stopped, and then resumed in another manner: "I rather think that she has gone out to post a letter or to make some little purchase, for which she feels pressed. I really wish she would return."

This last sentence revealed that undertone of an anxiety that the young man felt, without comprehending, and tried to conquer, without succeeding.

Meanwhile Willie Spicer made an excellent breakfast.

"Tell me, Willie," said Lily Gay, "how is your father, and how does he bear his solitude when you are away?"

"Oh, he is all right, but to speak the plain truth he does not bear his solitude very well. I told him that I should graduate in the spring, and after that should return no more to Rogues' Harbor. What on earth should an enterprising young man do at Rogue?"

"Nothing whatever; and yet I feel a very deep sym-

pathy for your good father in his lonely old age," said Owen.

"He shall not be lonely! I will keep my word with him. The young woman shall redeem the child's promise. And when you leave him finally to settle in New York, Willie, I will go down to Rogues' Harbor, and be his daughter and keep his house. I will do it because he was so good to my poor mother, and because I love him."

The young student turned and smiled upon the impulsive girl, saying:

"But there are others to be considered in this matter, fair lady. How, for one, will my friend Wynne like to part with his sister to an old man, hundreds of miles away?"

"Oh! I was never Owen's favorite sister. He will do very well without me, or I am much mistaken."

"What do you say, Wynne?"

"I say that the proposition is a matter for future consideration. If the old man were quite alone down there, and my sister wished to go and fill a daughter's place in his desolate home, I should not prevent her from doing so."

"Wynne, you do come out sometimes with surprising things! But I am happy to tell you both that the sacrifice—for it really would be a sacrifice—will not be needed. My father has made a fortune which will enable him to retire from business. He will sell out in Rogues' Harbor, and take a house in New York."

"I am really very glad to hear that. And you will reside with him?"

"Of course."

"And when does he intend to make this change?"

"Next spring, when I graduate."

Lily Gay looked from one to the other of the speakers, as if unable to believe the evidence of her own senses, and then she suddenly clapped her hands with joy, exclaiming:

"Oh! that is better than any thing I could have hoped for. Mr. Spicer coming to live in New York! Why, I

should almost as soon have expected to see the old church transport itself to the city! And he is really coming to live among us? Oh! Owen, how delightful that will be! To have him settled somewhere up town! And to go and spend days with him, as we used to do in the old times! And to have him come and spend days with us! It is almost too good to be true!"

Thus gayly chatting, Lily Gay arose from the table, and the others followed her example.

Summoned by the hand-bell, Nancy came in to clear the table.

"Set the coffee-pot on the stove to keep it hot for Lily May; she cannot be long in coming home now," said the young lady, as she left the table and went to her work-stand.

"Spicer, if you will excuse me for ten minutes, I shall then be at your service. I have a note to write," said Owen, seating himself before that little parlor writing-desk, which, as I said, was used in common by himself and the two young girls.

"Oh, never mind me, I will look over the morning papers," replied the young student, taking up the "Herald" and throwing himself into an easy chair to read.

And there was silence in the room for a few minutes, at the end of which an exclamation from Owen startled his two companions.

"What is the matter, Owen?" inquired Lily Gay, dropping her needle-work.

"What is it, Wynne?" questioned William Spicer, throwing down his paper.

And both at the same time looked up at Owen, who had risen to his feet, and was now standing—staring at, rather than reading, an open letter which he held in one hand while he pressed his brow with the other hand. He did not answer, but continued to stare along the lines of the letter, devouring its contents.

Lily Gay sprang to his side, and holding on to his

shoulder, looked over the letter with him, and then throwing up her hands, shrieked:

"Oh Heaven and earth! She has gone! she has gone! She has left us! Oh, what will become of her!"

"Hush! hush, my sister! let me read the letter to the close. It may give us some clue by which we may follow her and bring her home!" said Owen, laying his hand, which shook like that of a palsied old man, on her head.

The cries of Lily Gay and the silent agitation of Owen revealed to William Spicer that some startling discovery had been made.

He hesitated for a moment whether to encroach upon this domestic trouble, and then his friendship overcame his scruples and he went to the side of Owen and Lily Gay, who were both poring over the letter, and he asked:

"Owen, my dear fellow, is it any thing in which I can possibly help you?"

"Yes, yes, presently, presently; but now let me finish the letter! It may afford me some guide to action," replied the young man, without once removing his eyes from the lines that he was eagerly reading.

Young Spicer stood waiting patiently while Owen turned page after page of the long letter that he and his sister were perusing. At length it was finished. And Owen folded it up and put it in his bosom. And Lily Gay wrung her hands and wept.

"Oh, Owen, where did you get the letter?" she inquired amid her sobs.

"It was the first thing that met my eyes when I opened the writing-desk where she left it!" replied Owen.

"For the Lord's sake, who's gone, and what's the matter?" questioned Nancy, who re-entered the room a minute before.

"Oh, Nancy, Lily May has gone!" sobbed Lily Gay.

"What!—runned away?" inquired Nancy, staring in consternation.

"Yes, yes, yes!" wept Lily Gay.

"Well, Lord! what next? Why I didn't know as the child had a sweetheart in the world! Runned away! Well, my goodness! Who *is* the young willain?"

"*Silence, woman!*" exclaimed Owen in a voice that made Nancy start—"How dare you?—Lily May has gone alone, quite alone!"

"Oh, Nancy," sobbed Lily Gay, "she went away because of what she heard yesterday!"

"Poor gall! poor child! poor, dear baby! where has she gone?" inquired Nancy, in a tone of the deepest feeling.

"We don't know! We have not the least idea," wept Lily Gay.

"Now, then, Wynne! how can I serve you in this affair, which, by the way, I do not well understand," pressed William Spicer.

"Oh!" exclaimed Owen, with a burst of irrepressible emotion—"It is briefly this: My gentle darling never knew until yesterday that she was not our sister—the daughter of our parents! Yesterday the truth was rudely told her by a coarse and heartless girl from Rogues' Harbor. It was told her with the addition of every calumny that malice could invent, and every insult that scorn could inspire. Poor—poor Lily May! She was completely overwhelmed and prostrated by the blow! We did what we could to raise and soothe her. We thought we had succeeded, but she has left us, and here is her letter of adieu! Oh! I have no time to tell you all its contents! It is an outpouring of love, sorrow, and self-sacrifice, that could only emanate from a heart as tender and a spirit as pure and an experience as limited as hers. She imagines that her presence here would be a reproach to us; and so she has gone away, preferring to cast herself alone upon the wide world, rather than throw a shadow of reproach upon us! There! I can talk no more! We must act!"

"I am here to help you! Let the lectures and every

thing else go to the deuce! I am yours, body and soul, until she shall be found and brought home!" said young Spicer.

"First, then, we must ascertain as nearly as possible the time at which she left the house and the dress she wore. Lily Gay, when did you see her last?" inquired Owen.

"It was after twelve o'clock when she came to bed. And I was wakeful for a long time after that. I heard the clock strike two before I went fast to sleep, with my arms around Lily May's neck, for something seemed to whisper me that she was in some sort of danger, and I went to sleep holding her fast. When I woke up at nine o'clock this morning, she was gone."

"She probably left here, then, very early this morning."

"Have you any idea what dress she wore?" inquired Owen.

"Oh, yes, her gray gingham dress and black silk mantle, and white straw bonnet, trimmed with white ribbon. But oh, Owen, why are you so particular in asking about her dress? Oh, surely you are not going to pillory poor Lily May in an advertisement, with—'Left her home' and 'had on when she went away,' and all that, just as if she were a runaway apprentice?" said Lily Gay, uneasily.

"My sister," replied Owen, very gravely, "be sure that I shall conduct this search with every delicacy to our darling consistent with her safety. But her safety must be the first consideration, every thing must yield to that. We must find her if possible this morning. I shudder—my blood runs cold at the thought of what may be her fate, if we should not recover her before night. Spicer, we have no time to lose. We must begin our search at once."

"I am ready," said William Spicer.

"Oh!" exclaimed Lily Gay, "how shall I ever be able to stay home and be still, with all the suspense and anxiety I must suffer!"

"You are not to stay home, dear. You must take Nancy

with you and go upon a round of calls among all our acquaintances in this town and in the city, and inquire of them all. It is just possible that our darling may have taken refuge among some of them," said Owen.

"Oh, I am glad to have something to do! I do think I should lose my breath and suffocate if I had to stay home and be still," exclaimed Lily Gay, starting up with the intention of preparing herself for the journey.

"Stay one moment," said Owen; "listen—we will all meet here at the house to compare notes at five o'clock, do you hear?"

"Yes, I hear; but what a long time to wait! It is now only eleven, and it will be several hours before five o'clock."

"It will take all that time to do what we intend to do," said Owen.

"Nancy, never mind washing up the breakfast service. Get yourself ready to attend me immediately," said Lily Gay, as she hurried out to prepare herself.

CHAPTER XLVII.

THE SEARCH.

So they sought her that night,
And they sought her next day;
But they sought her in vain,
Till a week passed away.
The highest, the lowest, the loneliest spot,
Her lover sought wildly, but found her not.—*Mistletoe Bough.*

Owen and his friend did not wait for Lily Gay's reappearance, but set out at once upon their search.

A few minutes after they left the house she came down dressed for her walk, and Nancy came in to attend her.

They locked up the house, left it to take care of itself, and went forth upon their quest.

How vain that search and quest was, you already know.

Owen and his friend inquired at the ferry; but no one could remember among the crowds that went over whether any young lady answering to the description of Lily May had crossed early that morning or not.

They inquired at other points with no better success.

Then they went over to the city to pursue their search there; but in vain.

Next, they went the round of all the newspaper offices, and left at each a carefully-worded advertisement that could not in any matter compromise the delicacy of the fair young fugitive; since it was written in a manner that would be perfectly comprehensible to her, but utterly incomprehensible to all others. This mysterious advertisement implored her by every sacred duty and tender memory to return to her forsaken home and sorrowing friends, who could know no such grief in the world as the loss of their darling.

Finally they went to all the police-stations, imparted the flight of the young lady confidentially to several of the most respectable and shrewd of the detective officers, engaged their assistance, and promised large rewards if they should succeed in discovering the fugitive girl.

Then they turned their faces homeward.

"And who knows," said Owen, hopefully, "but what Lily Gay has been more successful than we have?"

"Heaven grant it!" replied William Spicer.

Meanwhile, Lily Gay and her duenna had made the round of all her acquaintances. Well did Lily Gay guard the delicacy of her foster-sister. At none among the houses at which they called—not even at that of their most intimate friend, Cora Campbell, did Lily Gay betray the anxiety that was troubling her heart. At each house she asked, in a seemingly careless manner:

"Have you seen Lily May this morning?"

And when answered "No," and asked "Why," she would reply, with apparent indifference:

"Oh, she went out before I was ready this morning; but I hoped to join her here."

And then, inwardly troubled but outwardly composed, she would take leave, and turn her steps to another house, where, after a little preliminary and common-place talk about the weather and the fashions, she would put the same question and receive the same answer. And thus she went through the whole circle of her acquaintances, without obtaining a single clue to the direction taken by Lily May.

At five o'clock, worn out in mind and body, and tormented with suspense and anxiety, they reached home.

Poor old Nancy, exhausted as she was, went straight to the kitchen, as she said, "to knock up a dinner."

Lily Gay threw off her bonnet and mantle on to the first table that came to hand, and then dropped into an arm-chair and burst into tears. But still through that shower of tears shone one little sunbeam of hope. It was that Owen and William, whom she momentarily expected, would bring her some news of Lily May.

While she was still weeping convulsively, the young men came in.

She started up eagerly.

"Have you gained any tidings of her?" she asked.

"Ah, no! but I hoped that you had heard something of her—and you have not?" said Owen, in that last hope that springs from despair.

"Oh, no, no, no! Oh, Owen! where can she have gone? where is our darling?"

"Heaven only knows! Heaven guard her!" groaned the young man, sinking into a chair, and wiping the cold perspiration from his pallid brow. He was suffering unspeakable agony in his anxiety and suspense.

"Owen, it is almost night! Oh, where will she stay to-

night? Owen, answer me! Is there no help in you?" cried Lily Gay, sobbing and wringing her hands.

"My sister, what man can do I have done and will do! May Heaven shield her and direct us!" exclaimed Owen, with a burst of anguish.

Nancy came in from the kitchen to lay the cloth for dinner.

"Has they heerd any thing of her?" she inquired, in a low whisper, of Lily Gay.

"Oh, no, no, no, Nancy! nothing yet. And it is almost night! And my heart will break!" sobbed Lily Gay.

"Oh, my Lor! Let us all hope and pray as she will be taken care of," sighed Nancy. And she began to set the table.

"What is the use of doing that, Nancy? I'm sure nobody can eat a morsel of dinner," said Lily Gay.

"*You* mayn't; and I dare say as you won't, poor child! 'cause you is a young woman. But I never yet see the man, young or old, as had his appetite took away by trouble; mind that! It's nothing but br'iled chicking, and fried bacon, and mashed taters. Lor! you can't knock up no sort of dinner in a hour," said Nancy, as she placed the viands answering to the bill of fare on the table.

Owen, with that gentle firmness for which he was noted, took his reluctant sister by the hand and led her to the head of the table, and then invited his guest to take a seat at the board, and finally he took his own place at the foot.

Lily Gay helped the others, but made not the slightest pretence of eating. Owen tried to share in the meal, if only in compliment to his guest; but William Spicer, who was very hungry, made quite a comfortable dinner.

As it was already so late, tea was brought in before they left the table.

Lily Gay took a single cup of that reviving beverage, and then they all arose.

Nancy cleared the table and lighted the gas for the evening.

"Oh, Owen! I cannot bear it! I cannot stop in the house! I must go out and look for her! It is quite dark, and where is she? oh, where is she now?" exclaimed Lily Gay, with a fresh burst of tears.

"Try to be as quiet as you can, my sister. We are going out again to renew our search—William and myself. But you must remain quietly at home with Nancy. It would be very improper for you to be roaming about at this hour," said Owen, gravely.

"But *she* is out! and alone! and exposed to Heaven knows what danger! Oh! I shall go mad!" cried Lily Gay, jumping up and wringing her hands and pacing the floor in a distracted manner.

"Sister, sit down, sit down and calm yourself, so that I may go and search for our missing darling. Remember how necessary it is for me to go after her; and yet I cannot leave you in this excitement. Pray control yourself," said Owen, taking the girl's hand and leading her to a sofa, and then bringing her a flask of eau-de-cologne from the chiffonier.

"I will, I will be as still as a mouse, if you will only go and look for her. Oh, Owen, every minute is an hour while she may be exposed to—no one knows what dangers in the streets to-night," said Lily Gay, making a heroic effort to calm herself.

Owen called Nancy in, and said:

"Get your young lady to bed as soon as you can, and remain with her through the night."

"Don't you be no ways uneasy, Master Owen. I'll mind her; good, too," replied Nancy.

"And who will remain with Lily May? Who will guard her?" sobbed Lily Gay.

"Heaven will! Now, do be quiet, sister, if you wish me to go," said Owen, earnestly.

"I am quiet; I am very quiet," answered Lily Gay, swallowing her sobs.

Owen stooped and kissed her, commended her to Heaven, and then, beckoning William Spicer to accompany him, took his hat and went out upon his second search for the lost girl.

Nancy followed him, and locked and barred the front door, and then returned to Lily Gay.

"Have they gone, Nancy?"

"Yes, honey"

"Oh, I *can't* be still. I seem to choke sitting here," exclaimed Lily Gay, starting from the sofa and recommencing her wild walk up and down the room.

Nancy sat down on a low stool and watched her.

"Oh, Nancy, you have a great deal of experience. Where do you think she is now?" inquired Lily Gay, wringing her hands.

"The lors-a-mighty knows, honey; for, as for me, I can't form the least idee."

"Oh, Nancy, I can't bear this dreadful weight of suspense much longer. I shall die; I shall die, if I don't hear soon," gasped Lily Gay, throwing herself in an arm-chair in a paroxysm of convulsive sobs.

"That is not the way to keep your promise to Master Owen," said Nancy, quietly.

"I cannot help it. I cannot. If she was lying dead before me I could bear it; but not to know where she is this dark and stormy night, with so many hours before morning—or what suffering or what danger is before her. It is that! It is that, Nancy!" gasped the girl, springing up and recommencing her distracted walk to-and-fro in the room.

To-and-fro, to-and-fro, many times she walked, until utterly exhausted she threw herself upon the sofa and asked:

"Nancy, what o'clock is it?"

"Ten o'clock, honey, and you ought to be in bed."

"Only ten o'clock, and there are eight or nine hours of darkness yet, and she may be out in it all. Roaming the streets a houseless wanderer at this very hour. Oh, my heart! I cannot—cannot endure it!" she cried, starting up and walking wildly up and down the room.

Up and down, up and down, until again exhausted she fell upon the sofa.

"Now, honey, take an old woman's advice, and go to bed! It can't do any good for you to distract yourself in this way! Go to bed, and I will sit with you! Come, go to bed!"

"Bed?—Do you think me such an unfeeling wretch as to lie down in my comfortable bed, while *she* is a homeless wanderer, through this dark, rainy night?" cried Lily Gay, bouncing from the sofa and traversing the floor in the most excited manner.

Backward and forward, backward and forward, until once more worn out, she dropped upon the sofa and inquired:

"Nancy, is the storm over, do you think?"

Nancy went to the window and looked out, and reported:

"Yes, honey, it is done raining; the clouds is a-breaking away and the stars is a-coming out."

"What time is it now?"

"After eleven, honey! Indeed I wish you would go to bed."

"Oh, Nancy! don't talk to me of bed. But if *you* are sleepy, lie down on the rug and take a nap."

"Well, honey, I just believe I will, for I am dead asleep —*augh!*" said Nancy, with a hideous gape. And she laid herself down upon the rug and fell asleep.

Lily Gay again sprang up and resumed her walk—to-and-fro, to-and-fro, until again she sank prostrated upon the sofa.

And so she passed the hours of that night of anguish—alternately walking wildly up and down the room, wring-

ing her hands, and sinking prostrate and sobbing upon the sofa.

At six o'clock in the morning the door-bell sharply rang. Its sound did not wake Nancy, but it roused Lily Gay, who was sobbing on the sofa, and she sprang up to open the door.

Owen and William stood there.

"Any news of Lily May?" breathlessly inquired the young girl.

"No, dearest, no!" replied Owen in a heart-broken voice, as he entered the hall and hung up his hat.

"Oh, Heaven!" moaned Lily Gay.

"You are up very early, my sister," said Owen.

"Yes, I am up early," replied Lily Gay. She did not tell him that she had not been in bed. "But you are very pale, Owen! And Willie must be tired. Go you two up to your rooms. You will find water and towels placed ready. And I will rouse Nancy and have breakfast got immediately. You must need it," she added; for she did not wish Owen to enter the parlor and find Nancy sleeping there, and in that way discover that she, Lily Gay, had watched all night.

They went up stairs, as she directed them.

And she returned to the parlor to rouse Nancy and send her into the kitchen to prepare breakfast, while she herself opened the parlor windows, aired and arranged the room, and set the table.

A pale, worn, sad-eyed party it was that assembled around the breakfast-table that morning.

Lily Gay asked many questions; but obtained no satisfactory answers. Owen could only tell her of his fruitless search.

After breakfast, which they scarcely tasted, Owen, without taking an hour's rest, set out again, accompanied by Willie Spicer, to pursue the vain quest.

And Lily Gay remained at home in an agony of suspense

that was more exhausting than any energetic action could have been.

Ah! many troubled days and many sleepless nights were to be the portion of this bereaved and sorrowing family before they could know for a certainty that their poor, wearied dove had flown home to her own nest, and rested there in peace and safety.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

MOTHER AND DAUGHTER.

Uneasy now becomes perforce,
The inevitable intercourse,
So grateful heretofore;
Each in the other can descry
The tone constrained, the altered eye,
They know that each to each can seem
No longer as before:
And yet while thus estranged I deem
Each loves the other more.—*Southey.*

Every day that Lily May spent with her new friends endeared her more to them. Her beauty, her grace and her goodness completely won their affections. Her frankness, too, upon every subject but one, charmed them. That proscribed subject was of her own antecedents.

Gladys hoped that, as days passed, she should win the confidence of her young protegé and hear her history. And she *did* win the confidence of Lily May; but she did not hear her history. This reticence on the part of one so young, so innocent and so candid, seemed very strange to the lady.

Arthur had his own theory about her—that she had been the innocent object of a sinful love; *that* he thought would rationally account both for her flight and her reserve.

Gladys soon thought that she herself had reason to accept

this theory with additions from her own experience in a conversation with Lily May. It happened thus:

Amiable as she was, the young girl could not conceal the ever-increasing sorrow that she felt in her total separation from her friends; the ever-gnawing anxiety she suffered in the strict non-intercourse with them. Poor Lily May felt as if an eternity had passed since she had parted from them; and as if she would have almost given her life and her soul for a sight of their dear faces, or a sound of their dear voices. She knew that they must be sorrowful. She feared that they might be ill. Yet she dared not seek news of them lest she should betray her abode and be reclaimed by them.

Sometimes in her intense desire to see or hear from them, she felt almost willing to be reclaimed; sometimes she felt even tempted to rush back to them. At such times she repeated her sad formula:

"Sorrow is better than reproach. It is for your honor I stay away, dear Lily Gay! honor, dearest, dearest Owen!"

And so she would nerve her gentle heart to bear the indefinite separation and the incessant suspense.

But all this wore upon the delicate girl. She lost her appetite and her sleep; she grew thin and pale.

Mrs. Powis saw this and watched her in pity and uneasiness. And one day when they were sitting together, engaged in needle-work, the lady, looking wistfully at the girl, said:

"My child, are you pining after the friends you have left?"

Lily May attempted to answer, but burst into tears instead.

"Do you wish to go back to them?" pursued the lady.

"Oh no, no, no! I must never go back!—nev—never go back!" sobbed Lily May.

"But why, my child?"

"I told you before, dear lady. I told you the first night

that I came here. I cannot go back, because I should carry reproach into their home."

"But, my child, one so innocent as yourself could not do so; it would be impossible."

"Yes, I am innocent; no one in the world ever accused me of being otherwise; but yet I should carry dishonor to them by going back, I should indeed, lady. And though I grieve so much in staying away, and I know they grieve so much at my absence, still I must stay away for their sakes; sorrow is better than shame," repeated Lily May for the twentieth time.

"And you will not explain this mystery to me?"

"I cannot, dear, kind friend, I cannot. I would if I could."

"Mary," said the lady, gravely, "you love these friends that you have left, you love them very much."

"Oh, yes, yes, yes; Heaven only knows how much! It is because I love them so that I stay away from them."

"But, Mary, is there not one among them that you love far more than the others?"

"Oh, yes, yes!"

"And which is that one, my dear? You may answer me freely. It is a friend's question."

"Oh, I know it is, dear lady, and I will answer truly. It is my dear brother that I love most, that I love more than my own life and soul! And he deserves it! he is so good and noble!"

The lady did not reply in words; but she put her arms around the girl's neck and drew her to her bosom. It was this brother, who was really no brother, that Lily May was grieving after.

Meanwhile Arthur Powis was fretting and fuming over the "law's delays," or rather the detectives'. Apparently the police found great difficulty in tracing Mrs. Llewellyn; for a fortnight passed before they discovered even the line of travel she had taken; and then the sum-total of their

knowledge was only this, that she had gone southward. Two of their most experienced detectives—Beck and White—were sent in pursuit of her.

Another week passed without news. And Arthur Powis became very impatient, for he did not wish to leave the country before the arrest of this woman; and yet his passage was taken on the steamer that was to sail on the first of October, and that day was very near at hand.

There was not the slightest reason, however, why Arthur Powis should rush off to Europe just at this time. The ostensible object of the voyage was to seek out and become acquainted with the impoverished young baronet who represented the elder branch of the Llewellyn family, and failing Gladys' children, would be the heirs of her estate. But that affair could have waited, and Arthur might have remained in New York for an indefinite period.

But the truth of the matter was simply this: Arthur Powis, like most other idle men of fortune, without trade, profession or business to engage him, or children to settle him, was extremely restless, never easy long in one place, always wanting to be going. And a sad chase over land and sea he led poor Gladys; for he never would go anywhere without her; she was all the world to him.

And now he wanted to be off again! Wales was an unexplored scene, the young heir of Llewellyn an unknown person, and as novelties both were interesting!

It was a few days before the steamer on which he had engaged passage was expected to sail that he was sitting at breakfast with his wife and her protegé, when the postman knocked, and the servant who went to the door brought in the morning's letters.

There were none for Gladys; her correspondence was very limited indeed; she was never long enough in one place to form a circle of acquaintances, much less a party of friends.

And there were none, of course, for Lily May.

There were only a few for Arthur, and they were of a trifling business character. He opened, glanced over and threw them aside carelessly one by one, until he took up a particular letter, which, as soon as he saw the post-mark, he eagerly tore open and rapidly perused.

"What is that, Arthur?" inquired Gladys, who had watched him until he finished the letter.

"It is from the detective, Beck, who went after Mrs. Llewellyn. He has— But I will read you the letter," said Arthur Powis, unfolding the paper and beginning:—

FOREST LODGE, *Sept. 20th*, 18—

MY DEAR SIR,—The game that we hunted, we have run to earth. I may say truly that we were in at the death. In plain terms, the party that we were sent after we found in this country house; that is to say, residing here, but she had gone out for a ride, and we waited for her return. But she never came back as she went. Her horse did, dragging the broken carriage behind him. We then went in search of the lady, whom we found bruised, wounded and insensible by the roadside. We brought her back at once to the house, and sent for the nearest doctor. But all he could do was to restore her senses for a few hours; after which she sank and died. This ended our business with her. At first everybody thought that she had been thrown from her carriage and killed by the fall. But the examination of the doctor, as well as the dying words of the lady, proved that she had been set on and robbed and murdered by her servant, a certain deaf-mute named Judas Blackmore. The coroner's inquest sat to-day and found a verdict of wilful murder against Judas Blackmore. The funeral of the lady took place this afternoon. The murderer is still at large. And I am remaining here to assist in the pursuit of him; for though as the magistrate said, I cannot act officially, I can give these simple country fellows a hint or two to guide them in their search. It is whispered that the lady confided to the minister who was with her in her last hours a packet, the contents of which were to be kept a profound secret, even from her son. Hoping this will satisfy you, sir, I remain respectfully, your obedient servant,

BENJAMIN BECK.

Arthur finished the letter and folded it up. Neither he nor Gladys spoke for several moments.

"It was very shocking," at length whispered Gladys, shuddering.

"Yes, it was," slowly assented Arthur.

"Well, dearest, *your* business with the wretched woman is over as well as the detectives'," said the wife.

"Yes! thank Heaven that it is!" answered the husband.

Gladys arose from the table, and went and threw up the window for air; she could not breathe; she felt on the brink of suffocation. The news of the murder of this woman, although she was her worst enemy, proved a great shock to Gladys; and as she gradually realized what it really was, she felt overwhelmed with horror.

Arthur followed her to the window.

"What is the matter, my dearest?" he tenderly inquired.

"Oh, Arthur, it is awful," she murmured.

"It is just," he answered.

"What a terrible fate!"

"What a fitting retribution!"

"But to fall by the hands of her own trusted servant."

"Confederates in crime are ever false to each other. They are ever ready to seize the first profitable opportunity to betray each other to destruction; to rob and slay each other if it will pay."

"It is horrible. But that child," said Gladys, looking around the room for Lily May, who was nowhere to be seen—"where is she? I hope she did not hear that sickening story. It was not a proper one for a sensitive girl."

"She heard not a word of it. With her usual delicate tact, she quietly slipped away before I began reading the letter aloud."

"I am very glad of it."

"And now, my dear, there is nothing to delay our voyage. Are you quite ready?"

"Very nearly. And if I were not, the two days that

intervene between this and Saturday would suffice me to get ready."

"All right, then; we shall sail on Saturday."

"And, Arthur?"

"Yes, dear."

"I shall take this dear girl with me."

"You will please yourself in that as in all other things, my good Gladys," said Arthur Powis.

And Gladys ran up-stairs to look after Lily May.

She found her in her own room quietly sewing.

"Always at work, you little busy bee," said Gladys, sitting down beside her.

"I was brought up to it, dear lady," replied the girl.

"What is that you are sewing?"

Lily May put the piece of work in the lady's hand. It was a gentleman's shirt-bosom.

"Ah, yes, I see. This is more beautiful stitching than any of the sewing-machines can turn out. But now let this lay aside for a while. I wish to talk to you," said Gladys, throwing the shirt-bosom on to the top of the bureau, and turning to the girl.

Lily May, in token of her obedience, took off her thimble and dropped it in her work-box, and gave her undivided attention to the lady.

"We are going to sail for Europe on Saturday," said Mrs. Powis.

Lily May turned pale, and began to tremble.

"Don't be frightened. We are not going to part unless you wish it. You shall go to Europe with us if you are willing to do so."

"Oh, dear lady, I am more than willing! I am glad to go."

"That is right. It is settled, then. And now you will require some few comforts and conveniences for the sea-voyage. And you must come out with me this morning to get them."

"Oh, dear lady, you have been so liberal to me already that I should be ashamed to accept any thing more until I have made myself more useful to you."

"Useful to me, my child? You are more than that. What if I should tell you that you have become necessary to me? I am childless. You seem to me a daughter. It is a sweet hallucination. Why should I not make it as near a reality as I can? Come, Mary, do not be proud with me."

"Oh! lady, proud with you! How could I be?"

"Then let me give you all that I wish to give you, and do not reject my gifts. I have very few delights, but to provide for you is one of the greatest. I am not very happy, Mary. Perhaps no childless woman is, no matter how highly favored she may be in all other respects," said the lady, with a tremor in her voice that thrilled the heart of the young girl, who stole to her chair, knelt down beside her, and murmured:

"I will be your child in love and service and obedience. I will never leave you till you send me away. I will do all that you tell me. And I wish you would set me something very difficult, or very painful, so that I might do it to show you how much I love you!"

The lady smiled, and smoothed the shining brown hair of the little head that lay on her lap, as she said:

"Suppose I were to tell you to communicate with your friends before you go to Europe, so that they may know where you are, and come to take leave of you?"

Lily May looked frightened, and clasped her hands, exclaiming:

"Not that! Oh, dear lady, any thing but that! They would take me back with them."

"But they would not do so against your will."

"Ah! but I could not resist them. Dear lady, please don't tell me to do that!"

"I will not. I only mentioned this to try you; and also to teach you that no one, how ever loving, submissive

and devoted, should part with that moral free agency which, as the crowning gift of God, should be held the most sacred and guarded the most jealously. Now, darling, get on your bonnet and mantle, while I order the carriage, and we will drive down town, and get what we require. Come! this is not a very difficult or painful command to obey."

"Oh, no, indeed it is not!" said Lily May, rising, and kissing the lady's hand.

Within half an hour from this time they were seated in the carriage, rolling towards Broadway, where in the course of three or four hours Gladys contrived to spend as many thousand dollars. But then—she was able to do it; and—she was going abroad.

She lavished gifts upon Lily May. Every thing that could possibly be useful, ornamental, or entertaining to the young girl was purchased—"without regard to cost"

Among the gifts that Lily May most highly prized was a guitar of the very best workmanship, elaborately finished, and exquisitely toned; and an unlimited quantity of the best guitar music.

"We shall have moonlight on the ocean and some calm weather, and how pleasant it will be for Arthur and myself to find some retired nook upon the upper deck, behind the wheel-house or somewhere else, and listen to your guitar," she said, as she made this present to Lily May.

"If I can only succeed in amusing you a little I shall be so glad," said the girl.

But it was not only upon Lily May that she spent all this money—enough to build a comfortable family mansion, purchase a small farm, or set up a young merchant—but upon herself and Arthur also. She bought every useful or useless article that she thought could minister to the real or imaginary wants of herself or her husband.

Poor, childless Gladys was extravagant for the same reason that Arthur was restless—she had no children to

interest her. She was very generous as well as thoughtless in her extravagance. She gave very munificently to charitable institutions. And she never passed a beggar on the street, or turned one from the door, without relief. And she would give a drunkard a shilling that he would be sure to spend on more drink as quickly as she would give a widow a dollar to buy bread for her children. And if she had possessed a settled home, she would have adopted several orphans and brought them up as her own. As it was, her husband's restless disposition and exacting affection, by keeping him wandering all over the world and dragging her after him, made this plan impracticable. So Gladys fed her hungry woman's heart with the dry husks to be bought for money. She possessed an enormous income in her own right and she made it fly. Without being excessively fond of dress, she bought every novelty in that line, wore it a few times, or only once, or not at all, and threw it to her maid. Similarly without having any stationary home to embellish with works of art, she purchased, at exorbitant prices, every picture, statue, vase or relic, that struck her fancy. Arthur never attempted to restrain her expenditures.

"There were two things to be said in favor, or in palliation of her extravagance," he said. "The income was her own, and her spending it lavishly was good for trade."

There was only one thing in which Arthur Powis was despotic. And that was in his insisting upon having the company of his wife in all his wearisome wanderings.

Gladys was often excessively tired and sick of what, between a sigh and a smile, she called, "This Satanic 'going to and fro in the earth, and walking up and down in it.'" But she knew that his exaction of her attendance grew out of the devoted love he bore her; and as she also loved him devotedly, she was too pleased and flattered to seriously find fault. She knew that she was the one woman in the world to him; that from his exclusive mood of love,

he would not even form innocent social friendships with other women, of however congenial a nature.

There was something a little morbid, a little selfish, perhaps, in the exclusive devotion of this pair to each other; but when we reflect upon all their circumstances and antecedents, we cannot wonder at them.

It was late in the afternoon when Gladys and her protegé reached home. Arthur also had returned, and dinner was ready.

After dinner, Gladys sent her maid, whom long practice in the service of her travelling mistress had made an expert packer, into Lily May's room, to pack her effects for the sea-voyage. Among the articles purchased for the young girl's use was a wonderfully capacious and convenient travelling-trunk, with drawers, cases, and recesses for the reception of all the different items of a lady's wardrobe. This stood in the middle of the floor.

Bessy, discarding Lily May's assistance, went to work like a graduate in the art of filling; and to the young lady's astonishment, the doctor of trunks in a very short time packed into it about twenty times as much as it might reasonably be expected to hold.

And then she pressed down the top, gave Lily May the key, and departed.

Not until that night, when she was alone in her bedchamber, and free from excitement, did Lily May begin to realize what she was about to do in leaving the country for an indefinite period, and putting the broad ocean between herself and the beloved friends of her childhood. And she wept herself to sleep.

The next day she spent in writing a long letter to her friends, in which at last she told them of the protection she had found, who and what they were, and where they were going. And she determined to post this letter on the morning of her embarkation. "For," reasoned Lily May, "I can now safely tell them every thing, to set their minds

at rest, because before they get the letter I shall be out on the ocean, beyond pursuit."

She resolved, also, when once clear of the coast, she would tell her benefactress the whole history of her past life, so far as it was known to herself; and also explain fully her motives for having persisted in secreting herself from her friends until she should be beyond their pursuit.

The day was passed by Arthur and Gladys in making the final preparations for their voyage.

One of the last things that he did was to leave orders at the General Post Office that all letters which should arrive for him after his departure should be re-directed to him at the "Adelphi," Liverpool.

The next day, Saturday, they embarked on board the Liverpool steamer. On her way down to the pier, Lily May got out and posted her letter. Then they went on. There was nothing to mark their embarkation. They had no beloved home to regret, no weeping friends to leave. At least neither Arthur nor Gladys had. And as for Lily May, a month of trial and discipline had taught her the wisdom and given her the strength to suppress her feelings in the presence of others, to whom their betrayal might give pain.

And so they sailed for Europe with every prospect of a prosperous voyage

CHAPTER XLIX.

A STORY TOLD IN THE MIDDLE WATCH.

Thou glorious mirror, where the Almighty's form
Glasses itself in tempests: in all time
Calm, or convulsed—in breeze, or gale, or storm,
Icing the pole, or in the torrid clime,
Dark-heaving, boundless, endless and sublime,
The image of eternity.—*Byron.*

THE voyage commenced beautifully. The sky was clear, the sea calm, and the wind fresh. A sea-voyage was not quite a novelty to Lily May; she remembered her journey by steamer from Rogues' Harbor to New York; but she enjoyed it none the less on that account. On the second day out she had a slight attack of sea-sickness; but she soon recovered from it; and then went on the upper deck, and joined Mr. and Mrs. Powis, who were both too habitual voyagers to suffer from illness when afloat.

And when all the ladies and many of the gentlemen were laid up in their berths, Lily May and her friends had the deck to themselves. Sometimes the three would promenade together. At other times Arthur would saunter off to a certain railed-in pen *de*secrated to smoking; and Lily May and Gladys would walk arm in arm up and down, forward and aft, until they grew tired, and then they would sit down upon one of the side benches and spend hours in watching the blue sky, dappled over with soft white clouds, and the bluer sea-waves crested with light frothy white foam. What a wonderful, beautiful color was the mid-ocean in this fine weather;—a clear, pure, deep, bright, ultra-marine blue, like an infinity of liquid sapphires, heaving, falling, sinking, swelling, and blazing in the light of the sun.

Lily May liked all this, but she was not happy. How

should she be? The memory of the beloved ones whom she had left behind her was never for an instant absent from her thoughts. In the presence of her benefactress she preserved a calm and even a cheerful demeanor, and she was often beguiled into gayety. But as soon as she found herself alone in her state-room she gave vent to her feelings in floods of tears.

The steamer was full of passengers; but our party had not as yet made acquaintance with any. Very few gentlemen and still fewer ladies appeared in the saloon, and next to none went on deck. It seemed as if nearly everybody was sea-sick; and those who were not so were in attendance upon those who were.

On the evening of the third day out, our party was tempted by the mildness of the weather and the beauty of the scene to remain on deck much longer than usual. There were no ladies on deck except Lily May and Gladys. And the gentlemen who were there, including Arthur, had gone forward to smoke in the pen.

Lily May and Gladys were seated on a pallet of rugs spread behind the wheel-house, and they were leaning against the back of the house and watching lazily the sky and the sea. It was a splendid—coolly splendid scene. The moon was full and at the zenith, and looked like a globe of silver fire shining amid the diamond stars that studded the deep blue heavens. The sea was rippling musically into deep, blue, foam-flocked wavelets. Away off to the right was a solitary sail on the horizon, gleaming whitely against the dark sky. Away off to the left was a snow-clad iceberg, looking like a gigantic temple of white marble, with towers, turrets and minarets—which had miraculously risen from the depths of the dark sea.

Calmly contemplating this scene with serene complacency, the mother and daughter, as yet unconscious of their mutual relationship, sat.

Lily May had played and sung all Gladys' favorite

songs; and now she reposed with the guitar on her lap, and idly strummed at intervals a few desultory sweet notes.

Both were silent, as though they felt that it was enjoyment enough simply to sit in that beautiful scene and breathe.

But suddenly Lily May spoke:

"Dear Mrs. Powis, if you please I will now tell you all about myself—I mean all that I know."

"Mary, love, do just as you please. Every thing that concerns you must be deeply interesting to me; yet I would not have you tell me any thing that it will give you pain to remember or relate. The time has past, Mary dear, when the knowledge of all your little past life was required to give me confidence in you. I could not have more confidence in you than I now have, even had I known you from your infancy—as it seems to me sometimes I have."

"Thank you, dear lady, for this and all other proofs of your kindness to me," said Lily May, lifting the hand of her benefactress to her lips. "Every day you are more and more gracious to me. But I really wish to tell you about myself; for I feel as if it were a fraud to keep my story from you."

"But it is not, Mary. You have a right to keep your own counsel. I am not your confessor. There is one Confessor General for the whole human race. It is God, the Omniscient, who alone can divine motives and judge actions, both justly and mercifully."

"My story is not a confession, dear lady. There may be sin in it, and shame, but they are none of mine; though I must now tell you all, and let you judge, with all the facts before you, whether you can keep me longer or not."

"Keep you, Mary, love! Why, I could never dream of forsaking you."

"I know you would not forsake me, dear lady. I know that when you have heard my story, if you should decide that I am not fit to remain with you and be your little friend,

you will give advice to guide me, and find work to support me."

"Dear child, know me and yourself better. There is nothing—I say it with due reflection—*nothing* that you could tell me which would induce me to part with you. Why, even if you earnestly wished to leave me, I should be deeply grieved to let you go."

Once more Lily May lifted the hand of the lady to her lips, and covered it with kisses and tears.

"Tell me your little story now, dear," said Mrs. Powis, gently.

"Well, I will. But I wonder where I ought to begin."

"At the beginning, of course, dear," said Mrs. Powis, smiling, to encourage her.

"But I did not hear the beginning myself until the end—that is to say, the very evening before I left my home and you took me in."

"Then begin where you please, my dear."

"First I ought to tell you that I am an abandoned child—supposed to be a child of sin," whispered Lily May, in an almost inaudible voice.

"But that is not ascertained," murmured the lady, also in a very low voice.

"No, it is not ascertained. Very little *is* ascertained about me except that from my very birth I was deserted by my parents who disappeared, leaving me on the hands of a worthy doctor, who had undertaken the care of me for a few days."

"It seems strange that *you* should have sprung from people so unprincipled. I cannot believe it, Mary," said Mrs. Powis, tenderly.

Lily May shook her head, murmuring,

"I fear it is too true."

"Couldn't the unnatural monsters have been traced, followed, and compelled to do something for their own child?"

"No; all trace of them was lost in the death of the good

doctor who had brought me home to his house; for, you see, it appears to have been a secret birth, and he kept the secret until he died. That was not long, for the day after he brought me home he was waylaid and murdered, in the Black Pine Woods, by a band of fugitive slaves, it was supposed, though no one ever knew, since the murderers have never been discovered."

"What a terrible story all together, Mary! Where did all this happen?"

"Down in Maryland."

"In Maryland!"

"Yes, ma'am; at a place called Rogues' Harbor."

"Oh! I do not know that place. But how fared it with you, poor little thing, after your protector died?"

"His widow took care of me for pity."

"God bless her!"

"He has. She has been in heaven these many years."

"Was she well able to adopt you, my dear?"

"Oh, no; she was very poor, for you see her husband had been a struggling young practitioner, who, when cut off so suddenly, left only debts and difficulties behind him. But she was too tender-hearted to turn the poor, helpless, forsaken babe away, and so she kept it, and gave it half her own babe's milk, and half its cradle. She was the gentle woman of whom I told you, as being the only mother I ever knew. She was a true and tender mother to me until her death, which occurred when I was between three and four years of age."

"And afterwards?"

"And afterwards, her son, my dear, dear brother, took care of me with his little sister. He was but a boy then; yet he worked for our support all the days, and in the evenings taught us to read and write and cast accounts."

"A rare, good, fine spirit!"

"Oh! the rarest, best and finest!—my dearest brother!"

"A brother who is no brother, little one."

"Ah, but dearer, nearer than any brother could ever be!" warmly exclaimed Lily May, speaking with as much innocence as ever.

"And you continued with him up to the time of your coming to me?"

"Oh yes! He continued to work for us, and he supported us in comfort and taught us all he knew. About six years ago he removed to New York, bringing us with him. He placed us at a first-class school in Hoboken. He entered the house of Abell, Brent & Campbell, on Broadway. He prospered. Why should he not? The blessing of heaven was over him. Every thing he touched turned to gold. He is now a partner in one of the richest firms in New York, and is himself one of the wealthiest among the *young* merchants of New York."

"What was the immediate cause of your leaving his protection?"

"Oh, madam! Up to the very day before I left I had supposed myself to be his own sister. But on that day while I was at school, in the recreation hour, the truth was suddenly told me by a haughty young girl, a new pupil, who came from the neighborhood of Rogues' Harbor, and knew more of my history than I knew myself."

"Did she know your parents?"

"I am not sure whether she did or not; but she knew that I was an abandoned, nameless child, brought up by charity. And she told me so in the presence of my schoolmates, adding cruelly that I was '*something that was not fit for a young lady's lips to speak, or ears to hear.*' Oh, how those words seemed pressed and branded into my heart! they are burning there yet!"

"The young brute! She should have had her ears well boxed!" indignantly exclaimed Mrs. Fowis.

"She had her ears well boxed, I am sorry to say. My sister—my foster-sister I mean—is of a very high-spirited and impulsive nature; and so she punished her on the spot.

It was wrong, and if my dear one had taken time to think she would not have done it."

"It was right! And if she had taken a month to think about it she would not have done it better! And yet I do not blame her so much as the unprincipled wretches who forsook you, leaving you to incur such reproach," said Mrs. Powis, warmly.

"Oh! please do not call them so, dear lady," pleaded Lily May, with a shudder.

"I will not if it pains you; though I don't see why it should. And now tell me, was that the reason why you left your foster-brother's house?"

"Oh, yes; it was all so sorrowful and so mortifying. We had to leave the school. I was partly heart-broken and partly brain-crazed. I knew I was a shame and a reproach to my dearest ones. I knew that if I remained with them they must again and again be made to suffer pain and reproach on my account. I knew also that they would never consent to part with me, and that if I left them they would grieve after me. But I reasoned that sorrow was better than shame, and so I stole away from them in the early morning, scarcely caring what became of me."

"And you were very wrong, little one. You reasoned from false premises; you acted in total ignorance of the world; and you deeply wounded true-hearted friends," said Mrs. Powis, gravely.

Lily May began to weep.

"Do not cry. All is well now. Providence took care of you. And you say that before sailing you wrote to your friends apprising them of your situation. But, Mary love, do you know that in all your story you have not mentioned one name? You spoke of the doctor, the doctor's widow, your parents, your brother, your sister, but all without mentioning one name. How is that? Is it an idiosyncrasy of yours to speak of persons only in their relations to each other and not by name?"

"I don't know, ma'am; it was not an intentional omission. I will remedy it now. The name of the good doctor who first took care of me was Wynne. And the name of my dear brother is Owen Wynne."

"Wynne? Wynne? Owen Wynne? Where have I heard that name before? Where did the doctor, his father, practice, my dear? You told me, but I have forgotten the place."

"Rogues' Harbor, ma'am."

"Rogues' Harbor—Doctor Wynne? Stay, I remember now. A few minutes ago I told you that I didn't know the place. I had indeed forgotten all about it. But the name Wynne recalls an incident in my tour through Maryland. We—my husband and myself—had gone down into that State to visit the grave of our little Mary. And we passed through Rogues' Harbor and stopped at a drug-shop with the name of Dr. Wynne over the door. We wanted to buy a few trifles for the toilet; and we were waited on by a very handsome and intelligent lad, who had charge of the shop and also of a pretty baby whom he had seated on the counter——"

"And—was the baby's name Lily May, and did you give her a broad gold piece?" exclaimed the young girl, in a low, almost breathless manner, and turning red and white in quick succession.

"Yes, I did," said Mrs. Powis, in an agitated voice.

"Oh, lady, was this the piece?" said Lily May, drawing from her bosom a broad gold double eagle, attached to a black ribbon.

The lady, trembling excessively, took the coin and turned it about until she found a certain mark—a supplementary star on the crown of Columbia—and then she exclaimed:

"Yes, it is; and you are——"

"I am Lily May. And the boy you saw was Owen," said the girl, dropping her head upon her bosom and weeping from excess of emotion.

"Strange, *how* strange! And yet, if the circumstance of my passing through Rogues' Harbor had not so completely slipped my memory until it was recalled, I should have recognized you weeks ago; for Lily May is a very uncommon name; and I saw it on your pocket-handkerchief the first morning after your arrival at our house. But what makes you weep, my love?"

"I do not know, ma'am; but certainly not sorrow."

"And you kept this coin all this time?"

"Oh, yes, ma'am. My dear foster-mother must have been frequently in bitter want while this was in her care; but she would not spend it. I do not know why she kept it; but when at last it was given into my keeping, I was seven years old, and we were all in good circumstances. I wore it always hung to a ribbon around my neck, as a sort of talisman. Old Nancy—that is, our dear old nurse and housekeeper—used to tell me that if I wore it, it would be a sort of safeguard to me. I never believed that; but I wore it in memory of the sweet lady that Owen said had smiled on me so lovingly."

The lady stooped and kissed the young girl, and then said:

"But I want to have more names, sweet Lily May! Did you never hear the name of your parents?"

"The name of my parents was not positively known, though strongly suspected. But indeed, dear lady, when my brother told me all he knew and suspected of my parentage, *I* was listening but for one thing—the proof of their marriage; and my mind was so distracted and my heart so crushed, that I could not listen coherently, and the names 'Llewellyn,' 'Stukely,' and 'Powers' or 'Bowers,' got all confused in my memory. Oh, dear lady, what is the matter?" suddenly broke off and exclaimed Lily May.

For her benefactress had sunk, pale, trembling, and half fainting to the floor.

"*Oh, my heart! my heart!*" exclaimed the lady in a dying voice.

"What is the matter, dear Mrs. Powis?" inquired Lily May, tenderly and anxiously.

"*Oh, child! child!*"

"Oh, what is it? What can I do for you? Shall I call Mr. Powis?"

"No, no," gasped Gladys, pressing both hands upon her heart—"Oh, this crisis is like the struggle of life with death!"

"*Do, do* let me call Mr. Powis, or the stewardess," pleaded Lily May.

"No, no, I say *no*, call no one," panted the lady. "But tell me—do you know the—*date of your birth?*"

"Yes, ma'am; it was on the fifteenth of July, near midnight, in the year eighteen hundred and ——. I was born in an old country-house, a few miles out of Rogues' Harbor. The good doctor brought me home in a close carriage driven by a deaf-mute. But after the doctor's death, we never could identify the house."

"Oh, merciful Heaven! my little Mary!" exclaimed the lady, clasping the girl suddenly to her heart, and bursting into a passion of tears.

For some time Lily May did nothing but tremble and wonder and embrace and kiss the violently agitated woman. But as the paroxysm of emotion continued unabated, Lily May whispered:

"Dear lady, what is the cause of your distress? Have I done any thing?"

"No, no, my darling! nor am I distressed! I weep for joy and for rage! Oh, my child, my child! I am your mother!"

"You——my mother!" gasped Lily May, catching her breath in consternation, and hardly knowing whether she was the more delighted or terrified.

"Yes, yes, my wronged child! I am your deeply-wronged

mother! But I never abandoned you, darling. Ah, say that you believe I never abandoned you, my child!" pleaded the poor woman, in a voice of anguish.

"I am sure you never did! But it is very strange! And am I afraid it isn't true! It is so much too good ever to be true! Are you sure, very sure, I am your child, dear lady?" inquired Lily May, trembling, fluttering, hoping, fearing, as though her life hung upon the issue.

"I am as sure as I am of my own identity! Don't call me 'lady' any more! Call me mother—sweetest name in human language!"

"Mother, mother, mother, mother!" murmured the maiden, luxuriating in the repetition of the name, and accompanying every word with an embrace or kiss.

"Oh, child, if I am dreaming and talking in my sleep, let me dream forever so," whispered Gladys, folding her late-recovered daughter to her bosom.

"And me, too," murmured Lily May, clasping her arms around the neck of her newly-found mother.

"Now nothing in the world is being wanted to our happiness! How proud Arthur will be of his daughter! How proud! Are you steady enough to go and call him, darling?"

"I don't know. I may stagger and talk nonsense, like our wood-sawyer does when he has had more rum than is good for him. But I will try," said Lily May.

But there was no need for her trying; for though the mother and daughter were too absorbed in each other to notice his presence, Arthur Powis, having smoked out his cigar, had sauntered up to them, stood over them, and heard the latter part of their conversation.

"I am here," he said, as Lily May arose.

"Oh, Arthur!" said Gladys, "she is our own child! I can prove it! And nothing now is wanted to perfect our happiness!"

CHAPTER L.

DISCLOSURES.

But thou, oh Hope! with eyes so fair,
What was thy delighted measure?
Still it whispered promised pleasure,
And bade the lovely scenes at distance, hail!
Still would her touch the strain prolong,
And from the rocks, the woods, the vale,
She called on Echo, still through all her song;
And where her sweetest theme she chose
A soft, responsive voice was heard at every close,
And Hope, enchanted, smiled and waived her golden hair!—*Campbell.*

On the morning succeeding the third night of agonizing suspense, Owen, Lily Gay, and Willie Spicer were seated together at the breakfast, that neither of them had now the inclination to eat, when the postman knocked, and old Nancy brought in a letter on a silver tray.

The brother and sister made a simultaneous dash at it, for both at the same moment recognized the handwriting of Lily May.

Owen got possession of the letter and tore it open.

"Is she safe? Is she well? Is she coming home?" breathlessly inquired Lily Gay, before Owen could have time to ascertain the facts for himself.

"I do not know. I will read the letter. It is a very strange one," he said; and accordingly he read Lily May's letter aloud.

Poor child! She had intended that it should be a very satisfactory one; but it was not so to Owen.

She began with the most earnest and sincere expressions of affection for her brother and sister. She repeated her touching plea for leaving them. She implored them to remember her with love, but not with anxiety; because she had found shelter with a rich and kind lady, who was able

and willing to protect her until she could find work with which to support herself. And she promised to write very often, and let her dear ones know how she was getting on. And she finished her letter with a prayer that the Lord would forever bless and prosper her brother and sister and their faithful servant.

But she did not mention the name of her protectress, nor the street she lived in, nor number of her house.

"At least she is safe and well, and that is a great deal! And after a while, perhaps, she may relent and return to us," said Lily Gay, wiping her eyes.

Neither Owen nor Willie replied. Their knowledge of the world warned them that there might be more to fear than to hope from any "rich and kind lady" whom the wandering beauty might chance to meet.

"If one only knew where to address a letter to her," continued Lily Gay.

"Ah, yes, if one only knew that," sighed Owen, as he arose from the table.

"We must try to find out," suggested Willie.

"Yes, yes, immediately; there is no time to be lost," hastily assented Owen.

And both left the house together.

Indeed, they were both, if possible, more anxious about Lily May than they had been before the receipt of her letter. But neither spoke to the other of the precise cause of their new anxiety; it was too horrible to be discussed. Each argued with himself that "the rich and kind lady" who had so strangely sheltered the young creature, was in reality some fascinating temptress, who was trying to lure the beautiful girl to perdition.

Gravely and silently, though very rapidly, they hurried to the pier to catch the ferry-boat. And when they reached New York, still gravely and silently, but very rapidly, they hurried to the police station.

There Owen took one of the detectives aside, and put

Lily May's letter in his hand, and gave him fresh instructions.

And the search recommenced, and for some time continued in vain, for the detectives looked everywhere but in the right place. They searched for the missing maiden among the splendid temples of sin, and among the homely haunts of honest industry; but they found her not, nor a trace of her.

And so weeks went on, and Owen grew haggard and ghastly with grief and anxiety, until another signal day—Saturday, the first of October.

On the evening of that day, Owen and Lily Gay were seated together at the table before the fire. Owen held a book in his hand, but it had been half an hour since he had turned a page; for he was not reading, but his eyes were fixed on vacancy, and his spirit was searching for Lily May.

Lily Gay had some needle-work in her hand, but she was not sewing; her hands rested upon her lap, and her eyes upon the floor; she too was thinking of her lost companion.

They were expecting Willie Spicer to come in every moment.

And while the clock was striking seven, he entered, looking cheerfully, holding a letter in his hand, and saying gayly:

"Here is something from our wandering dove, which I have a presentiment will be satisfactory."

Owen seized the letter, tore it open, and hurried through its contents, while Lily Gay breathlessly watched him. Well she might! As he read, a whirl of emotion rushed over Owen's expressive countenance. He turned red and pale and red again; his features trembled, his eyes filled with tears, and then his whole frame shook! What was it? good or bad news? What moved him so—joy, grief, hope, fear, satisfaction, despair? She could not tell!

She saw only that he was convulsed with a tremendous tempest of the soul.

"Oh, Owen—what, what, what—" she gasped, losing her breath and looking down.

"Thank God! oh, thank God!" burst forth from Owen's swelling heart.

"She is safe and well! She is coming home!" exclaimed Lily Gay, joyfully jumping to a conclusion.

"She *is* safe and well! Thank heaven!" earnestly replied Owen.

"And—she is coming home?"

"No, she is going farther from us! But we can bear that now. Oh, it is such an inexpressible relief to know that she is safe and well!" exclaimed Owen, with a sigh, in which he seemed to throw off an Atlas' burden of anxiety.

"But we knew *that* before," said Lily Gay.

"Ah, my dear! no, we did not! for we knew nothing of the character or even of the name of her protectress," said Owen.

"And do we now?"

"Yes."

"And she is leaving the city?"

"She is doing more than that. She is leaving the country."

"Oh, Owen!"

"Yes, but I will read her letter. Oh, my dear! the ways of Providence are past finding out!—trite saying, yet ever true. But I will read the letter," said Owen, taking it up.

The brother and sister had talked so eagerly and so fast that they had not given Willie Spicer a chance to slip in a word. In fact, they had forgotten his very existence until now reminded of it by his saying:

"Am I to hear the letter read also?"

"Certainly, Willie. You are one of us," replied Owen, smiling.

Then he read Lily May's second letter.

As in the first, she commenced breathing devoted love to the dear friends she had left. Then she wrote that as she was about to sail for Europe with her kind benefactress, she would tell them all about that lady, whose name was Mrs. Arthur Powis.

"Mrs. Arthur Powers!" said Lily Gay.

"Yes, yes, her mother! Providence guided the steps of the poor lost girl to the very threshold of her mother's house!"

"Her mother's house!" repeated Lily Gay, in amaze.

"Yes, yes, dear girl, don't you remember?"

Lily Gay, who had been following Owen's voice by reading the letter over his shoulder, thus gratifying at once both sight and hearing, now peered more attentively at the orthography of the lady's name, and answered:

"Owen, this name is *Powis*, not *Powers*."

"And so was the name of Lily May's mother, *Powis*."

"Oh, Owen, are you sure that this lady *is* really her mother?" anxiously inquired Lily Gay.

"As sure as I can be of any thing from mere circumstantial evidence," replied Owen.

"Does Lily May know that the lady is her mother?"

"Apparently not by the tenor of her letter."

"Does she suspect it?"

"No, I think not."

"Does the lady know it?"

"Know what, my sister?"

"That the young girl she befriends is her own daughter?"

"How can I tell? She may know it or she may not. If she does know it, that is probably the reason why she befriends her. But she has not revealed the knowledge to Lily May, who does not seem to have the slightest suspicion of the truth. But I will go on with the letter," said Owen, taking up the paper again.

The remainder of the letter contained a full account of Lily May's arrival at Mrs. Powis' house and of all the in-

cidents of her residence there, ending with the shopping expedition and the preparations for embarkation.

"The lady *must* have known Lily May was her own child! It is hardly possible she would have done so much for one she supposed to be a stranger," said Lily Gay.

"I do not quite agree with you, my sister. Lily May is very charming; and if the lady was rich and childless, and if she took a fancy to Lily May, she might have reasonably done all this," replied Owen.

"Finish the letter," said Lily Gay.

The letter concluded with warm expressions of affection and earnest prayers for the Lord's blessing to rest upon the writer's friends.

"It is strange that Lily May didn't suspect the relationship of this lady to her. Did you not tell Lily May that the name of her supposed mother was Powis?"

"Yes, but she probably mistook the name for Powers, as you and others did."

"Oh, if she has really found her mother, how strange!"

"How providential! We have much, so much to be thankful for in any case," said Owen, as he folded up the letter.

While he spoke the door-bell rang, and the sound was speedily followed by the entrance of Detective Hopkins, who came in bowing, and then beckoned Owen aside.

"We have found traces of the young lady," he whispered.

"Well?" said Owen.

"And there is no doubt that she sailed for Europe this morning, in the company of Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Powis."

"Oh yes," said Lily Gay, who had overheard that whisper, "and I have some news for you, Mr. Hopkins."

"Ah! what is it?"

"Columbus has discovered America. It is really true. Now, what do you think of it?"

"I think that you are condescending to amuse yourself at my expense, Miss Wynne."

"She means," explained Owen, "that your news comes somewhat late. We have already information direct from the young lady herself that she has sailed for Europe with some friends."

"Ah, indeed! That is more satisfactory than any thing I have been able to ascertain. And so my services in the matter are no longer required?" said Mr. Hopkins.

"No; but I must thank you for the zeal that you have displayed in the investigation. And I must request you to be so good as to call at the counting-house to-morrow, when I will settle with you for your trouble," said Owen.

And the detective bowed and left the room.

At that moment the door-bell rang sharply.

"Surely, Owen, you must be holding a reception here to-night," smiled Lily Gay.

As she spoke the parlor-door was opened by Nancy, who ushered in:

"Mr. James Stukely."

"Stukely! How are you? I am very glad to see you. But—bless my soul, what is the matter? Have you been ill?" exclaimed Owen, starting up to welcome his friend, and then stopping short to gaze upon his sorrowful and haggard countenance.

"Wynne, how are you? I am glad to see you! But—bless my soul, what is the matter? Have *you* been ill?" inquired Mr. Stukely, using the very same words that had been used by Owen, and staring in consternation upon his white and ghastly face.

"I have been ill in mind, but not in body. I am all right now, however," said Owen.

"Well, you don't look so; and that's the sacred truth," said Mr. Stukely.

"And you?" inquired Owen.

"It is the same with me. How do you do, Miss Lily Gay? That's Spicer! how do you do, Will?" said Mr. Stukely, shaking hands with his two other friends.

"Sit down, Stukely," said Owen, when this ceremony was over.

"Well, I think I will, for I have not the strength to stand on my feet long at a time. Extraordinary!" said the young man, sinking with a sigh of relief into the depths of an easy-chair.

"What is it, Stukely?" gently inquired Owen, looking with concern upon the changed face of his friend.

"Why, how the mind does overcome the body! I had no idea that trouble would make any one so ill. But, in fact, it was the first trouble I ever had in my life, and it prostrated me so that it put me to bed for three days, and Miss Nelly had to give me wild cherry bark tea to compose and strengthen me," sighed Mr. Stukely.

"You have been in trouble, Stukely?" sympathetically inquired Owen.

"I believe you! In trouble? yes! I have lost my only mother!" said Mr. Stukely, with a sob.

"I am sorry for that, Stukely. But in the course of nature, you know, that was to be expected."

"Oh, yes. I know in the course of nature that was to be expected. But it *wasn't* in the course of nature. And it *wasn't* to be expected that she should have been set on and murdered by that monster of a deaf-mute!"

"Murdered! And by the deaf-mute!" exclaimed Owen, in a low and horror-stricken tone.

"Yes!" gasped Mr. Stukely, bursting into tears and sobbing like a child.

Lily Gay went and poured out a glass of brandy, and brought it to him. She meant to have given him wine, but in her haste mistook the bottle.

So he swallowed the fiery draught at a gulp. And it strangled him and set him to coughing. But this proved a wholesome counter-irritant, and when the fit was over Mr. Stukely felt better.

"Can you tell us, Stukely, how all this occurred?" inquired Owen, as soon as his guest became composed.

"Extraordinary!" replied the latter.

"What is?"

"Why, the effect of this uncommon strong wine. I feel better than I have since it happened."

"It was brandy, I am afraid. I don't think my sister knows one from the other. We only keep it for emergencies."

"Well, I should think it was very good for emergencies," said Mr. Stukely.

"For *some* sort, perhaps. But tell me now, Stukely, if you can, how this terrible event occurred."

"Why, this was the way of it. It all came out on the coroner's inquest. My only mother was pressed for money. You know her constitution always required a great deal of money to keep it up. And the want of money always had the most depressing effect upon her mind and body."

"As it does on most others," said Owen.

"Yes; well, as she was suffering for the want of this—tonic—you may call it, she went and sold Judas to a slave-factor for three hundred dollars."

"Yes."

"But he was an—extraordinary—fellow for cunning. And he suspected her and watched her and waylaid her and—did the deed."

"Horrible! Has he been taken?"

"Yes; but not alive."

"He committed suicide, then?"

"No, he didn't. Who ever heard of a colored person doing such a thing as that? No, they hang on to life as long as they can."

"He was shot by his pursuers then?"

"No, he wasn't. He was found dead. And from the appearance of the body it was supposed that he had been dead for several days. And, furthermore, that he who had robbed and murdered his mistress was in his turn robbed and murdered by that gang of runaway negroes who

haven't been broken up yet; for, you see, when found, he was shot through the body, and his pockets were turned inside out and rifled."

"What a horrible story! Willie, give my sister a glass of water; she is nearly fainting," said Owen, as he noticed Lily Gay turn deadly pale and sink back in her chair.

"It isn't the right sort of a thing to talk about in a young lady's presence, and so I will change the subject a little," said Mr. Stukely.

"And tell us what brought you to New York, where, indeed, we are very glad to see you," suggested Owen.

"Ah, well, you see, my only mother, who had a magnificent constitution at all times, and great strength, even at her advanced age, lingered several hours after she was mortally wounded—she lived, in fact, until the middle of the next day, when she died." Here Mr. Stukely broke off to weep a little more, and so lost the thread of his discourse.

"But your business in New York?" said Owen, reminding him of the dropped subject.

"Extraordinary! Oh! Ah! Yes! My business in New York! Well, you see, in her last hours my mother had Parson Morley with her. And she made certain disclosures of family secrets, which Mr. Morley took down in writing, and which she signed and left in Mr. Morley's charge. After the funeral Mr. Morley delivered them to me, and asked me if I could get them into the hands of the proper persons. Well, I undertook to deliver them to their final destination; and here they are," said Mr. Stukely, laying upon the table two closely-sealed packets.

Owen took up the first that came to hand. It was a very thick packet, addressed—"To Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Powis." Then he took up the second, which in all respects except one resembled the first. This exception was in the fact that the last mentioned was directed to "Owen Wynne, Esq.," and marked "Private and confidential."

"I will take charge of the one directed to myself," said Owen, putting his own packet in his pocket; "and as for the other, you will either have to send it by mail, take it yourself, or wait until the parties for whom it is intended return from Europe."

"Return from Europe! Extraordinary! Why, who has gone to Europe?" inquired Mr. Stukely.

"Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Powis sailed for Liverpool this morning."

"Extraordinary! That couple are always on the wing. I had heard from two very gentlemanly friends of my mother, who were on a visit at our house, that Cousin Gladys and her husband, who were acquaintances of theirs, were living up town somewhere. I have got the address, with name, street, and number of the house, all correct; and I intended to go and look them up to-morrow; and I only came here first because I knew where to find *your* place without looking for it. And they have just this morning sailed for Europe. Extraordinary! Well, if they ain't like the Irishman's flea, I don't know who is; for as sure as you put your finger on them, they ain't there. Gone to Europe!"

"Yes; and what is worse, they have taken our darling Lily May with them," said Lily Gay.

"Extraordinary! what did they do that for? Lor', Wynne was there any thing after all in that suspicion of yours?" eagerly demanded Mr. Stukely, forgetting his grief in his curiosity.

"Yes. There was every thing in it, Stukely. And in all human probability the contents of these two packets will go to confirm that suspicion; if, indeed, it needed confirmation," said Owen, gravely.

"Ah, indeed! Tell me all about it. How did Lily May become acquainted with Cousin Gladys?"

"It is quite a long story, Stukely. And you must excuse my telling it now. Some day I will do so. Here

comes Nancy to lay the cloth for supper, which, after your long journey, you must really need. And now, if you will go to your room—you know where to find it—and get some of the dust of travel off you, by the time you get back supper will be ready. Spicer, will you go with him, like a good fellow?"

"Certainly," said Willie Spicer, jumping up with alertness.

When the young men had left the room, Owen lighted a gas-burner at a distant corner and retired to read the packet directed to him. It was really what he had anticipated it to be—the confession of Mrs. Llewellyn, taken down from her lips by the hand of the Reverend Mr. Morley.

The paper described the manner of Doctor Wynne's death; at the reading of which Owen became so much agitated that he had to leave off the perusal for a while and take a deep draught of cold water.

Lily Gay, who sat there watching him with the most intense interest, now begged him to tell her what it was that disturbed him so much.

But he answered her:

"My dear, you must try to wait patiently until I have got through with the perusal of this paper. Then all that it is proper you should know I will tell you."

"Tell me one thing now, or I shall lose my breath. Tell me whether that paper proves that Lily May is the child of Mr and Mrs. Arthur Powis, and I will ask you no more. I will wait patiently to hear all the particulars," persisted Lily Gay.

"Yes, it does prove beyond the shadow of a doubt that Lily May *is* the child of Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Powis. But it seems to exonerate them from the suspicion of having abandoned her. They both appear to have been grossly deceived into the belief of her death," said Owen, glancing hurriedly through the document and speaking from that cursory view.

Then he read it more carefully. It was a complete narrative of the concealment of Lily May's birth and of the deception that had been practised upon her mother in the false representation of her death and burial.

In addition to this confession there was a private letter from Mr. Morley to Owen. It was marked "strictly confidential." And it advised the recipient that James Stukely knew nothing of the blood-guiltiness of his mother. And it implored Owen Wynne, inasmuch as the criminal was dead and gone to answer for the crime before a higher tribunal than any on earth, and as, therefore, no end of justice could possibly be served by exposing her guilt to her unhappy son, that he, Owen Wynne, would forbear to do so, at least for the present.

Owen folded up this letter; concealed it in the breast-pocket of his coat; fell into deep thought; then into prayer; and then he came to this decision:

"Yes, for the present, I *will* forbear to wound the feelings of the guiltless son with the story of his mother's guilt. He may hear it, but not from me."

Then he tore from the confession of Mrs. Llewellyn all that related to the deep crime of her life, and left only that which related to the history of Lily May, which he then put into the hands of his sister, saying:

"Here, my dear, is the whole story of our darling. Put it in your pocket and read it in the retirement of your own room."

Lily Gay took it eagerly and thrust it into her pocket.

"And now another thing I have to speak of, which will surprise you, my love."

"What is that, Owen?"

"Let us see—this is Saturday, October first, is it not?"

"Certainly; I should think you would remember this day as long as you live."

"The next steamer for Europe sails from Boston on Wednesday."

"Yes, but what of that?"

"You and I go by her, that is all!"

"Oh, Owen!"

"It is sudden, my dear, I know, but it is important. If you can put up enough clothes to last us through the voyage, we can get a complete outfit at Liverpool."

"Oh, Owen, there will be no difficulty in that. Why, I could fit us both out for a voyage to the East Indies in twenty-four hours, for that matter; and here we have three days to get ready in."

"If it wasn't that, what was it?"

"Why, I was so astonished! the idea of going to Europe so suddenly!"

"Don't you like it?"

"Like it? Why of course I do! I like the voyage for itself, independent of the prospect of seeing foreign countries, and, above all, of meeting again with our darling Lily May; for I suppose it is after her and her parents you are going?"

"Yes."

"And I am perfectly delighted! Oh, Owen, how good of you to take me with you!"

"Why, you never imagined that I would leave you here unprotected, or with no wiser protector than old Nancy? No, that did very well while you were a little child, but it would not do now when you are a young woman, my sister," said Owen, very gravely.

"But what will you do with the cottage?" anxiously inquired Lily Gay.

"Leave it in the charge of Willie Spicer, who will like to retain his room here, and of old Nancy, who will keep the house and wait on him."

"That will be a very good plan. And how long shall we be gone, do you think, Owen?"

"That depends upon circumstances. If we should reach Liverpool before our friends should have left that city, we

shall be able to return in six weeks from the day of sailing from these shores. But if we do not find our friends at Liverpool, we may have some trouble in tracing them, and that may keep us away for twice the specified time."

"And the firm?"

"Oh! *that* will find some business for me to do while I stop over on the other side; of that you may be sure."

CHAPTER LI.

ON THE OCEAN STEAMER.

How gloriously her gallant course she goes!
Her white wings flying—never from her foes;
She walks the water like a thing of life,
And seems to dare the elements to strife.
Who would not brave the ocean storm—the wreck—
To move the monarch of the peopled deck!—*Byron.*

Before Lily Gay could ask another question, Mr. Stukely and Willie Spicer re-entered the room; and Nancy, being summoned by the bell, brought in the supper.

"Owen, the voyage is not a secret, is it?" inquired Lily Gay, as she sat down at the head of the table, and motioned her friends to take their seats.

"Oh, no! it is no secret," replied her brother.

"Then let me have the pleasure of announcing it, will you?"

"Certainly, if you desire it."

"Of course I do. Oh, Willie, what do you think? And, Mr. Stukely, what do *you* think?"

"What?" questioned both the young men in a breath.

"Such a surprise!"

"What is it?" inquired Willie Spicer.

"Oh, I hope it is nothing bad! All the surprises I have

had lately have been such very bad ones!" sighed Mr. Stukely.

"Oh, no, this is not bad at all! It is good, Mr. Stukely! We are going to sail for Europe in the Wednesday steamer! What do you think of that, Willie?"

Apparently Willie did not think well of it at all. But to make sure, in case there should be any doubts as to the facts, he inquired:

"*Who* is going to Europe?"

"*We*, I tell you!—Owen and myself."

"Is this so, Wynne?" inquired Willie, in a lugubrious voice.

"Yes, it is so, Spicer," answered Owen.

"It is very sudden."

"Yes; but the importance of the step justifies its suddenness."

"And, oh, extraordinary! you can take over the packet to Cousin Gladys and her husband, can't you?" exclaimed Mr. Stukely, with an eye to business.

"Yes, I intend to do so, Stukely."

"And have you read *yours*?"

"My packet? yes," answered Owen, very gravely.

"And was it what you supposed it to be—an account of Lily May's parentage?"

"In part it was," answered Owen. "It proves, as I supposed it would, that Lily May really is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Powis."

"Well! I really never would have believed, unless you had told me, Owen, that Cousin Gladys would have been so wicked as to desert her own child!" exclaimed Mr. Stukely, with more of righteous indignation than Owen thought him capable of feeling.

"Mrs. Powis never deserted her child. There was a cruel deception practised upon her," said Owen; but then suddenly recollecting that he could not proceed without deeply wounding the feelings of this well-meaning young

man, he desisted, merely adding: "This is no time for explanation."

"Willie, don't look so heart-broken. We are not going to expatriate ourselves for ever and ever," said Lily Gay, smiling.

"No, certainly not," added Owen, cheerfully; "and we are not going to turn you out of your lodgings. On the contrary, we are going to beg you to stay here, and keep the house warm for us until our return. Nancy, of course, is a fixture, and will wait upon you. Come, what do you say?"

"How long will you be gone?" inquired Willie Spicer.

"Perhaps not more than six weeks."

"Whew! that is a long time," said the poor fellow.

"Extraordinary! No, it isn't. Wynne couldn't do it sooner. It will take two weeks to go, two to come, and leave only two to do the business that takes him over there. Extraordinary! What are you thinking about?" very sensibly questioned Mr. Stukely.

"Anyhow, it seems a very long time to me," complained Lily Gay's lover.

"Too long for you to stop here alone?" inquired Owen.

"Oh, it is not that! If you two go to Europe and I have to remain in America, I had rather stay in this cottage than in any other place, of course. I shall not feel so hopelessly separated from you while I am staying in your home and waiting for your return," said Willie Spicer, with a disposition to make the best of things.

"Stukely," said Owen, "you never yet gave us more than two days of your company here; but if you will consent to stay away from Miss Nelly long enough to see us off, and if then you will remain a little while with Spicer to cheer his loneliness, I shall consider it a great favor."

"Oh, thank you, Wynne. I did intend to return home on Monday; but since you make a point of it, I will write to Miss Nelly and tell her the reason, and then I *will* stay

remained on deck, basking in this refulgence of the sky and sea.

She grudged the few minutes that it took her to hurry down into the saloon to take a little dinner.

And even after the sun had sunk beneath the horizon, drawing down after it the dazzling path of light from across the waves, she lingered on deck to enjoy the view of open sea, swelling and sparkling beneath the splendor of the moonlight.

And it was very late when at length the prudential counsels of Owen prevailed with her to seek her state-room and go to rest.

Ah! poor Lily Gay! that was the last pleasant evening she was destined to have for many days.

In the night the wind arose, the waves rolled, and the ship tossed fearfully. It was not a storm, nor even a gale; but a fine, fresh, fair wind, such as "old salts" delight in, and the ship leaped on before it over the sea, at Heaven knows how many miles an hour!

But all this did not agree with landsmen and landswomen.

So in the morning Lily Gay could not rise from her bed. Her head seemed filled with boiling lead and her stomach with tartar emetic, lobelia and ipecac, all in a state of fermentation. She was suffering all the loathing and degrading horrors of sea-sickness.

Owen, missing her from the breakfast-table, and guessing the cause of her absence, paid her a visit in her state-room.

But—so demoralizing are the immediate effects of sea-sickness that Lily Gay, generally so amiable, received her kind brother with a torrent of reproaches.

She rebuked him for bringing her to sea at all, knowing as he must have known how much she would suffer from sea-sickness; and for sailing at that particular season, being certain, as he must have been, that it was the roughest in the year; and for selecting that especial steamer, feeling

sure, as he must have felt, that it was the rollingest old bowl on the ocean.

In vain Owen tried to soothe her by assuring her that her illness would be transient and its effects beneficial; that this season of the year was the most favorable of all seasons for their voyage; and that this steamer was one of the finest in the company's service.

Lily Gay would not be entreated, and the whole tenor of her talk went to prove that Owen brought all this suffering upon her with deliberate malignity of purpose. She reproached him for not thinking of something to cure her; and then inconsistently enough, for not pitching her overboard and putting her out of her misery. And she wished that she was dead, and that the ship was at the bottom of the sea!

Owen, who knew nothing experimentally of the morally deforming character of sea-sickness, was dismayed.

But the stewardess, a good, patient, motherly creature, advised him not to worry himself, and above all not to reason with a sea-sick woman, who was never amenable to reason.

"Why bless you, sir," she said, "many ladies of the nervous and excitable sort are a great deal worse than this one is. But it is a comfort to reflect that the harder sea-sickness goes with them at the time, the more good it does them afterwards."

Owen, being in the possession of his health and senses, accepted the words of the stewardess, and took comfort from them.

But Lily Gay being morally delirious told Mrs. Waters to hold her tongue, for an ignorant old pig, and to let her alone, and get out of her sight, for that she, Lily Gay, hated everybody and wanted to die.

When turning upon Owen, she demanded to be informed why, since he was determined to bring her where he knew she would be so ill and helpless, he had not permitted her to provide herself with a maid to attend upon her instead

of leaving her at the mercy of an old wretch like the stewardess.

In vain Owen gently reminded her that there had been no time. And the stewardess assured her, that if she had brought a maid, the maid would have been down on the floor, ten times as sick, twenty times as cross, and a hundred times as troublesome as the mistress—a statement of contingencies that Owen deemed simply impossible.

But now such a violent paroxysm of illness seized Lily Gay that Owen had to fly from the state-room, and the long-suffering stewardess to give her whole attention to the patient.

In two or three days, however, Lily Gay recovered from this revolutionizing illness and arose from it as bright and gay and sparkling as a summer landscape from a thunder-gust.

And she was the first to laugh at the extravagant lamentations, denunciations and maledictions in which she had indulged during her trial. But she was not penitent either. She flatly refused to apologize to anybody for her bad behavior, declaring that her rage was a symptom of her illness and not a fault of her nature; and that she was no more accountable for her nervous irritability than she was for her degrading nausea and maddening headache.

And Owen was too happy to see her well again to find fault. And then her real kindness of heart, now that she was herself, showed itself in her improved manner to the patient stewardess, whom she now treated with the most tender consideration.

The weather continued to be glorious. Never had a steamer a more rapid, pleasant and prosperous voyage. The wind was fair, fresh and steady: and the ship ran swiftly on before it for the shores of the old world.

But one single incident of any importance marked the voyage.

It was on the morning of the fifth day out, that Lily

Gay and Owen, going up on deck to take their usual promenade before breakfast, saw a number of passengers gathered in the after part of the ship, holding pocket telescopes and taking sight at some object far to the northwest.

"What is it?" inquired Owen, joining the group.

"We cannot make her out," said a gentleman, passing his glass to Owen; "but we think she is the Belgia that sailed from New York on Saturday last, and that something has happened to her machinery."

"The Belgia!" repeated Owen, in dismay, as he lifted the glass to take a sight at the lagging steamer that seemed to be perfectly stationary on the water.

"The Belgia!" echoed Lily Gay, in consternation, as she drew to her brother's side.

Ah! well might they shudder at the mention of that name, in connection with danger. It was the name of the steamer on which Lily May and her parents had sailed.

"*Is* it the Belgia, Owen? Oh, *is* it the Belgia, Owen?" anxiously whispered Lily Gay.

"I cannot tell you, my dear. I see only an ocean steamer, stationary.—Why is it supposed to be the Belgia, sir?" inquired Owen of the gentleman who had lent him the glass.

"Because she is the last ocean steamer that sailed before this one. And the Italia, that left New York yesterday, cannot have come half so far."

"True," said Owen, despondently.

"Oh, Owen, if she is in distress, why doesn't our captain put the ship about and go to her assistance?"

Owen did not immediately answer; he was straining his eyes through the glass to try to make out the situation of the Belgia.

But the owner of the spy-glass replied:

"There is no good reason to suppose that she is in

actual distress, Miss. She has made no signal to that effect She is only stationary and behind time. Something has probably happened to her machinery which the engineers may soon set right."

"But I wish the captain would put the ship about and see," said Lily Gay.

"My dear young lady, if our captains were to 'bout ship to run down every questionable case they meet with on the ocean, there never could be any certainty in the arrival and departure of the mail steamers."

"But we must have passed very near that steamer, and it is a pity we did not stop to speak her," persisted Lily Gay.

"We passed her in the fog, last night. We did not see her until this morning, when she was barely visible to the naked eye on the edge of the horizon. We have been leaving her rapidly behind ever since. We can now just discern her through the telescope. In a few minutes she will be gone."

"She *is* gone," said Owen, returning the telescope to the owner.

As the breakfast-bell now pealed forth its joyous summons, and as all our voyagers, having got over their seasickness, were blessed with voracious sea-appetites, they went *en masse* down into the saloon.

The conversation at the breakfast-table turned upon the stationary steamer that they had passed in the fog at night, and had only sighted on the lifting of the fog in the morning, when she had been left leagues behind on the edge of the horizon.

Everybody seemed of the opinion that she was the Belgia, and that some accident to her machinery had caused the temporary delay and stoppage.

Owen and his sister endeavored to take comfort, but in vain, for they continued to be very anxious.

Meanwhile their steamer was flying eastward before the

wind. In a day or two their talk began to be of their speedy arrival, and of their prospective custom-house delays.

On the evening of the eighth day out, a cheery cry came from the man on the lookout, and was taken up and echoed and re-echoed until it reached the saloon; and the burden of that cry was:

"CAPE CLEAR LIGHTHOUSE."

And the next morning, when the brother and sister went on deck, their eyes beheld for the first time the shores of the old world. And in all its length and breadth a fairer scene could not have been found than that on which they gazed—the beautiful Cove of Cork, seen by the glorious autumn sunrise.

There was some hours delay here to land Irish passengers, to take off a channel pilot, to telegraph the latest news to London, and get aboard the latest papers; and then the ship got up her steam and steamed up the channel to the mouth of the Mersey and thence to Liverpool, where she landed her passengers late in the evening.

The passengers made a rush for the custom-house. But Owen, holding Lily Gay on his arm, and leaving his luggage to the mercy of the officers, seized hold of the first respectable-looking functionary that he saw and eagerly inquired:

"Is the Belgia in?"

"No, sir; but she is due several days, and the greatest anxiety is felt for her safety," replied the man, who was a custom-house officer.

"Then it was the Belgia that we passed near St. George's Bar. I had hoped otherwise," said Owen to himself, as he turned away.

But now the news was being asked and told between the passengers and the people on the shore; and the report went around that the Prussia had passed a steamer supposed to be the Belgia in a crippled condition near St. George's Bar.

Leaving all this excitement, Owen saw his luggage through the ordeal of the custom-house, and then called a cab, put Lily Gay into it, took a seat beside her, and ordered the driver to the Adelphi Hotel, where he succeeded in engaging a pleasant suit of apartments for himself and his sister.

And there they resolved to remain and await news of the Belgia.

One all-absorbing care filled their minds: It was for Lily May's safety.

CHAPTER LII.

NEAREST AND DEAREST.

Where'er I roam, whatever realms I see,
My heart untravelled still returns to thee:
Still to my brother turns with ceaseless pain,
And drags at each remove a lengthened chain.—*Goldsmith.*

Lily May became the idol of her newly-discovered parents. They could scarcely bear to lose sight of her. From the time she left her state-room in the morning, until she retired at night, she was scarcely for a moment absent from their sides. She sat between them at the table, and on the sofa of the ladies' cabin; and she walked between them on the deck or stood between them leaning over the balustrades. They made her tell them the whole history of her young life; which she was as much pleased to relate as they were to hear.

At first Lily May was excited and apparently perfectly happy in the devoted love of her parents; but then came a reaction and a change. Her thoughts reverted to the faithful friends of her childhood, who had succored her when she was left alone, the loving friends who were now suffering all the miseries of wounded affection. She

thought of them all day, dreamed of them all night, and often stole away and hid herself that she might weep for them, alone and unseen As the days passed she grew pale, thin and wan; she lost her cheerfulness, her appetite and her sleep; still in her parents' company she tried to be gay, but her very smiles were sadder than another's tears.

All this could not escape the loving and watchful eyes of her mother and father; they saw it and became very anxious; they frequently talked of it when alone together. Mr. Powis wished to question his daughter on the subject of her sorrow; but Mrs. Powis advised him to be discreet and leave the affair in her hands; and told him that she would question her daughter in private upon the first fitting opportunity.

That opportunity soon came.

One morning Lily May did not appear at the breakfast-table. Mrs. Powis sent a steward to ascertain if she was well. The messenger came back with a message from Lily May to the effect that she was quite well and would rise presently. Mrs. Powis finished her own breakfast and then went below to see what really had detained her daughter.

She found Lily May still lying in her berth, with a very pale face and red and swollen eyes.

"Why, *what* is the matter, my darling?" said the mother, in a tone of ineffable tenderness, as she sank down to the side of the berth and took her child's head upon her arm.

In an instant Lily May's arms were around her mother's neck and her head was on her mother's bosom, and all reserve melted away in a burst of tears, as she sobbed forth the words:

"Oh, mamma, mamma, I do believe my heart is breaking!"

"Hearts don't break, my darling; but tell me what it is that grieves you so much," said Mrs. Powis, in a soothing manner.

But renewed sobs only answered her.

"My darling, tell your mother, who loves you more than her own life, what troubles you so excessively? It cannot be that this extreme grief is caused by your absence from your friends."

"Oh, yes! yes, mamma! It is that! it is that!"

"But, my love, you have your parents now, who will devote their lives to your happiness."

"Oh, but, mamma, they were so near and so dear!"

"We are nearer and dearer, Lily May."

She answered with her sobs and a few gasping and inarticulate syllables, of which only "*nearest and dearest*" were audible.

"Don't weep so, love; you shall see your friends again. You shall acknowledge as warmly as you please your gratitude to them for all they have done for you."

"Gratitude? gratitude to Owen? *Oh, mamma,*" said Lily May, in a tone of indescribable pain.

"But, love, you shall show your gratitude in some substantial manner that will do him good. You are the heiress of enormous wealth, Miss Powis," said her mother, smiling, "and the young man is, I understand, engaged in mercantile pursuits. We will add a hundred thousand dollars to his capital, as a mark of our esteem and as a compensation for his care of our child."

"Oh, mamma! mamma!" exclaimed Lily May, shrinking as if in exquisite pain, "never do that! never, never do that!"

"But why not, my dear? We can well afford it. You will never miss it from your dowry, Lily May."

"Oh, mamma! you don't know! you don't know! or you would never talk of gratitude and of money for all that Owen has done for me!"

"I *don't* know; and I don't understand, love. What do you mean? Is it possible that you do not feel grateful to this young man, nor wish to repay him?"

"Grateful to Owen?" murmured Lily May, in a tone of ineffable sweetness—"grateful to him? Oh no, no, no. I am not grateful to Owen. Is the babe grateful to the mother that gave it life and cherishes that life with infinite tenderness? Oh no, no, but it loves her! it loves her! Does the bride give gratitude to the husband who blesses her life with his mighty love? Oh no, no, no! She gives not gratitude, but her whole heart—herself!"

"But, my darling, this sort of love to a brother, or, what is still farther off, a foster-brother, is excessive, you know."

"Excessive? Oh, dear mamma, I said you did not know, and you do not, all that Owen has been to me, all that he is now! Under Divine Providence, I owe him life as well as all that makes life worth having. All that know any thing about my infancy know that I should have died in the first week of my life, if it had not been for his watchful, tender pity and care. And from that time up to this I have owed him food, clothing and shelter; moral, religious and intellectual culture, and above all—oh, yes, above all!—an infinite love, patience and tenderness, that nothing less than the devotion of my whole life could begin to repay!" said Lily May, with a burst of tears.

"My darling, don't weep so much," said Mrs. Powis, laying her hand upon her daughter's head. "You shall see him again, and see him often. He shall be indeed as a brother to you and as a son to us. My poor darling! it grows to be a wonder to me how, loving this guardian as you did, you ever found courage to leave him."

"And it is a wonder to me," said Lily May, "a great wonder to me! But I was so shocked, distracted, *frenzied* by what I had heard, that I was not myself. I thought my presence in his house was a reproach to him and Lily Gay; and I ran away, not caring what became of me. Oh, I know now—and the knowledge has been growing on me ever since I left him—that I ought not to have done any thing upon my own responsibility. I ought to have con

sulted him. I did not belong to myself; I belonged to him. He saved my little bit of a life, and cherished it until I grew what I am. And I am his own. 'Owen's own Lily May' is what I have been called from infancy. Oh, mamma, as far back in the dim, distant shades of memory as I can look, I see Owen's loving eyes bent down on mine—the only loving eyes that ever looked upon me. The dear woman that nursed me had a haggard and care-worn face, and its anxiety and anguish often frightened me; but Owen always smiled on me—oh, so tenderly! And to think—to think I have repaid all this by forsaking him and wounding him, as I have! Oh, my brother! Oh, my brother! Oh, my dear, dear Owen! I never was worthy of your love! I am the viper that stings the cherishing bosom! the dog that bites the feeding hand! Oh, mamma! mamma! it is not home-sickness and sorrow, more than it is a sharp remorse that is killing me. Oh, mamma! mamma! if you love me, send me back to him! I am his own Lily May!" cried the girl, amid a tempest of sobs and tears.

"You shall see him again soon, my love," said Mrs. Powis, laying her hand tenderly upon the head of her child. "But, my darling, I do not understand this love that you bear this guardian. What is it—daughter's, sister's, or sweetheart's love? Tell your mother, my child"

"Mamma, I do not know; indeed I do not. I only know that my life seems grafted upon his life, so that torn away from him I die. Yes, that is it, 'grafted upon his life.' I was a poor little twig, torn from my parent stock, and cast away; and he picked me up, and grafted me in his heart, where only I can live. Oh, mamma, I have friends who are very near and dear to me, and you and papa are much nearer and dearer still; but Owen is *nearest and dearest of all*," replied Lily May, without the slightest hesitation in her voice, or blush on her cheek, or quail in the eyes that she lifted to her mother's gaze. Her tone

was steady, her face was pale, and her eyes were eloquent with the earnestness of her words. Why, indeed, should this guileless child of nature blush to confess a love so pure, so pious, nay, indeed, so holy, as was her devotion to her—what? What was Owen to her? Bosom friend, brother, guardian, lover? He was all of these in one! He was every thing to Lily May.

Instead of speaking to her, Mrs. Powis gazed down upon her daughter in much uneasiness.

"Oh, mamma, send me back to him! Oh, if you care for me at all, as I know you do, send me back to him! I have suffered so much since I left him. And the longer I stay away the more I suffer. The farther and farther I get away the shorter and shorter my very breath seems to become. I shall sink and die under it, mamma! It is growing worse and worse with me. Oh, I thought that all the pain would be in the first parting! I thought if I lived through that terrible wrench of tearing myself away I should get benumbed and not suffer any more. But oh, every day that has passed, and every league that we have sailed, has added more weight to the burden of this sorrow. Mamma, dear, will you send me back to him?"

"Lily May, you left your guardian-brother because you thought that the doubt which hung over your birth unfitted you to be the inmate of his house and the companion of his sister. But that doubt has now been removed; your birth and lineage are faultless; and you now wish to return to him. But tell me, Lily May, if that doubt still existed, would you still wish to return to him?"

"Oh, I should in any case long with an unutterable desire to go back; but I do not think that I should go, to be a reproach to them. I think I should bear this anguish of separation until it should kill me. That would not be long."

"Is it so bad as that, my darling?" said Mrs. Powis, laying her hand caressingly upon the brown curls of her daughter.

"Oh, mamma, listen! I look out upon this immense circle of blue water bounded by the horizon; I think how many hundreds of miles of waves roll between me and him whom I would be willing to die to see again, and I feel as if I should lose my breath and faint, or lose my reason and go mad; and I can scarcely help screaming."

"Poor child!"

"And, mamma, I dream every night of being at home. I no sooner lay my head upon my pillow and drop asleep than my spirit flies home. Oh, these dreams, mamma! they are so life-like and perplexing, they are almost enough to bewilder my intellect. Every time I dream of being at home, I feel so *sure* that it is a living reality and no dream! And then I wake up and feel the motion of the ship, and hear the noise of the machinery and the beating of the waves, and I remember that I am on the ocean—far, far away from my dear home, and going farther every day! And I feel a desperate wish to turn the steamer around. And then I know that it is impossible for me to do so, and that I must go farther and farther, farther and farther over this broad ocean, from my dear home; and I grow wild, and feel dangerous impulses that I can scarcely control; and then I cry all the rest of the night."

"Oh, my child, I am sorry to hear this! Was it crying all last night that has made your eyes so red and swollen this morning?"

"Yes, mamma; but I did not wish you to see my red eyes and feel distressed about me, and that was the reason I stayed away from the breakfast-table; but you came in, and the truth came out."

"As it was right that it should, my dear."

"Oh, mamma! I had such a lovely, mocking, cruel dream of home last night! I was so sure it was a reality!"

"What was it, darling?" said Mrs. Powis, who thought it was good to encourage her daughter to talk.

"I dreamt that we sailed on to Liverpool, and took the return steamer, and came back to New York. Then I

dreamt you put me on board the ferry-boat to go to Hoboken alone; and that I landed, and walked up the lane leading to our cottage. And I knew I hadn't been gone more than a month, though I felt as if it had been years; and I looked up at the old familiar shops and houses, to see if any change had come over them in my absence; but none had come. Oh, it seemed so real! And I dreamt that I reached the cottage, and that they were all so glad to see me; and we were all sitting in the porch. There was Owen, and myself, and Lily Gay, and Willie Spicer——"

"Who is *he*, my dear?"

"An old friend of ours—a young medical student."

"Ah—old friend, but young student! Go on, my dear."

"Well, I dreamt that we four were sitting in the porch. I was sitting in the corner, with my chair tilted back against the post. It was chilly October weather like this, and all the rose-bushes in the yard were withered. It was just after sunset, and the western horizon was flushed with red which was reflected in the river below us. Across the river I saw the shipping of New York. Oh, it seemed all so real!"

"Go on, my darling."

"I dreamt that as I sat there I told them all. The reason of my going away, and the incidents of my absence. And particularly I told Owen how homesick I was when on my voyage out, *and what tantalizing dreams I used to have of being at home.* Was not that strange?"

"Yes, my dear; it was a curious introversion of thought."

"I thought I held my hand above my head and toyed with the withered leaves of the rose-bush that grew up by the post, as I said to Owen, 'I have often dreamt of being at home when it has seemed as real as this. And indeed so like this, that I am almost tempted to fancy this a dream. So I will crush one of the withered roses, thorns and all, in my hands, and prove that this at least is a reality, since if it was a dream I should be sure to awake.'

and—*woke up*, to find myself lying here, with my hand upon the swinging pin-cushion, that I had fastened to the curtain of my berth!—*woke up*, to find that I was again deceived by a dream, and that I was not at home, but on board this outward-bound steamer, many hundreds of miles from my dear brother, and going farther and farther at every turn of the wheel! Oh, mamma! what an agony of disappointment it was! and what a shock to my faith in the stability and reality of all things! Even now, mamma, I have a sort of hope that I am really at home, and only dreaming that I am on the steamer. My mind is growing confused, mamma. My dreams seem so real, and my waking experience so dreamy, that I scarcely can tell the one from the other."

"My poor, dear child! your heart and brain have been too severely tried. Be at peace, my darling; for be assured that your happiness is the first consideration with both your father and myself," said Mrs. Powis, pressing a kiss upon her daughter's brow.

"And—will you send me back, mamma?"

"We will *take* you back, my darling."

"When, dear mamma?"

"By the first steamer that returns after our arrival at Liverpool."

"Oh, dear mamma! how far are we from Liverpool?"

"We are about half way across the ocean, my love."

"Then we are about fifteen hundred miles from Liverpool! And when we get there we shall be three thousand miles away. That added to the fifteen hundred will make four thousand five hundred miles that we shall have to sail over before we can see Owen!"

"Yes, my love; but we shall be able to do it all in three or four weeks. And now that you have my promise, you must be reasonable. And your first reasonable act must be to take your breakfast. And then you must rise and dress and come up on deck."

"Yes, dear mamma, I will. What is that?"

"Some one tapping softly at the door; the stewardess, I suppose," said Mrs. Powis, rising and turning to see.

It was really Mr. Powis, standing outside the door.

"How is our dear girl? Is she ill?" he anxiously inquired.

"Oh, no; she will join us on deck presently! Wait here a moment for me," said Mrs. Powis. And she gently closed the door and spoke to Lily May.

"My dear, I will send you some breakfast, and afterwards you will find us on deck."

Then she went out to her husband, took his arm, and passed on. Seeing the stewardess, she directed her to send some tea and toast into Miss Powis' room.

When they reached the upper deck they walked on to their favorite spot—the space behind the wheel-house—and there they sat down to talk.

"What delayed our daughter this morning?" inquired Mr. Powis.

"Arthur, I told you Lily May was not ill. And neither is she, in body."

"What then?"

"She is ill in mind. She is struggling with a great sorrow that is seriously affecting her nerves—perhaps her brain."

"Gladys, you alarm me."

"I am myself alarmed. She has made me her confidante. She is pining and dying for the friends she has left behind. She dreams dreams and sees visions of her home and her friends all night; and broods over her separation from them all day; and her dreams are so life-like, and her realities so dream-like, that she confesses she scarcely knows one from the other. Such a state is morbid and dangerous. I fear the deadly drugs that were administered to me before her birth have so seriously impressed her constitution as to render her peculiarly liable to morbid conditions."

"Heaven forbid! But do you think that the loss of those friends whom she voluntarily left is the *only* cause of her sorrow?"

"Yes, I do; or rather the loss of *the one friend* in whom her life seems bound up."

"Tell me all about it, Gladys."

Mrs. Powis gave him the details of her interview with Lily May.

"What can we do about it?" inquired Mr. Powis, in perplexity.

"Do what I have promised in your name and my own. Take her back to New York in the first steamer that leaves after our landing. You see how she looks. And as for me, I believe the course I propose is the only means of saving her life."

"But, dear Gladys, when we get there, how then? We cannot, of course, give up our daughter to the charge of her late guardian."

"No, but we can give her the opportunity of free association with her friends, who appear to be very worthy people. Then, gradually and tenderly we can separate them. Lily May is not strong enough to bear a sudden and final wrench. Now, then, Arthur, you will consent to take her back to New York?"

"Yes; I see no objection to that. Indeed, our object in going to Europe (to look up our next of kin) is forestalled by the discovery of our daughter. We have nothing particular to take us or to keep us there."

While he spoke the pretty head of Lily May appeared at the top of the steep stairs, and he at once started up and ran to assist her to get upon deck.

"It is all right, my dear. Your father has consented, and we are all to go back by the first steamer that sails after our arrival," said Mrs. Powis, making room for her daughter on the rug.

Lily May lifted up her face to kiss her father in acknowl-

edgment of his kindness, and after he had pressed his lips to hers she sat down beside her mother. And the bright autumn day on the mid-ocean passed very cheerfully with the little family group.

In the dead of the night that followed this day all the passengers on board the steamer were suddenly aroused from their sleep, not by any violent shock and noise, but by the sudden cessation of all motion and sound.

Each passenger started up out of bed in more or less trepidation, and listened in more or less anxiety, in the expectation of soon hearing a mighty rushing to-and-fro of officers and crew with the announcement of some awful disaster. But as every thing remained quiet, each passenger composed himself or herself to sleep again, and slept as well as they could while missing the usual terrific noise of machinery with which the ocean steamers lull their children to sleep.

In the morning a fog white as milk obliterated all the boundaries of sea and sky. And the steamer was still motionless. The passengers assembled on the upper deck to find out the cause of the stoppage. The general opinion was that the steamer had run aground on a sand-bar. But when the truth came to be known it was this:

There was something wrong with the machinery which the engineer could set right in a few minutes, or hours, or days at most.

It proved to be days. For all that day they remained stationary, while an incessant sound of rasping, hammering and tinkering went on. And the fog continued to brood over them. And a second and third day passed in the same manner. It was all that Mr. and Mrs. Powis could do to restrain the impatience of their home-sick child, to whom this indefinite delay was very trying.

On the night of the third day a steamer passed them so near that they could hear the sound of her paddle-wheels.

In the morning the fog had cleared away, and the steamer

that had passed them in the night was seen far away to the eastward.

The passengers on deck took out their telescopes to look at her.

Mr. Powis took out his glass—a very fine one purchased from the manufacturer in London. Mrs. Powis and her daughter stood near him.

If they could but have known that Owen was on that steamer! that Owen was at that moment levelling his telescope at their own steamer!

"What is it, Arthur, dear?" inquired Gladys.

"It is the steamship that passed us in the fog last night. She must be the one that sailed from Boston last Wednesday—the Prussia, if I am not mistaken in the name."

Even as he spoke the Prussia dropped down below the eastern horizon, setting as the sun arose.

At this moment a cry of exultation came up from below, as their own steamer began once more to breathe, to pant, and to move on the water.

"We are off!"

"We *are off!*"

"WE ARE OFF!"

Was the cry that was taken up and echoed and re-echoed through the ship.

They were off indeed, flying eastward at the rate of twelve miles an hour.

The remainder of the voyage was very prosperous, and in due time they anchored in the Cove of Cork.

While Lily May stood by her mother's side, enraptured with her first view of that most beautiful harbor, her father formed one of a group of gentlemen who were talking with some visitors who had come off from Queenstown to ask and tell the news.

Presently Mr. Powis came back to his wife and daughter.

"My dear Gladys, it was the Prussia that passed us. She got here yesterday, and has gone up to Liverpool.

To think that she should have sailed four days after us and got into port one day before us," said Arthur.

"On account of that stoppage. It is too bad."

There was but a short delay in the Cove of Cork; and then the Belgia put about and sailed up the channel to the mouth of the Mersey and thence up to Liverpool, where they arrived late at night.

As soon as they landed, Mr. Powis, leaving all their effects at the custom-house, called a cab, put his wife and daughter into it, and gave the order:

"To the Queen's Hotel."

"You see the great English seaport, for the first time, by gas-light, my dear," said Mrs. Powis to Lily May; "but to-morrow you will see it from the most favorable point of view, by daylight."

CHAPTER LIII.

REUNION.

It gives me wonder great as my content
To see you here before me. O, my soul's joy,
If after every tempest comes such calms,
May the winds blow till they have waken'd death.
I cannot speak enough of this content;
It stops me here: it is too much of joy.—*Shakspeare.*

THE next morning, in a private parlor of the Queen's Hotel, a pleasant party of three sat down to a nice breakfast. It consisted of Mr. and Mrs. Powis and Lily May. They had slept well, had risen refreshed, and were in excellent spirits.

Even Lily May was elated with the idea that she had got to the end of her voyage, so that the next move would be to turn around and go back again.

At another time and under other circumstances she would have desired to see all that was worth looking at in

Liverpool, and then to run up to London to see the Tower, Westminster Abbey, St. Paul's Cathedral, and all the wonders of that old city, and perhaps extend her tour into Scotland and the Highlands, and Heaven knows where else.

But now she was only anxious to embark on the first steamer and go back to America. She was hungry, thirsty, faint and sick for home and friends.

"Papa dear," she said, as she divided her attention between the breakfast table and the bay-window which looked down upon the busy street with its gay shops and strange folks — "papa dear, have you inquired when the next steamer leaves for New York?"

"You spoiled, impatient little woman! I know without inquiring; the sailing days of the ocean steamers from this port are fixed. This is Saturday morning, and one sailed, quite crowded. We could not have got a passage in her even if we had got in yesterday morning, instead of last night. The next steamer sails on Wednesday."

"Saturday, Sunday, Monday and Tuesday—four days to wait, papa! Oh dear!"

"They will give you an opportunity of seeing London."

"Oh, indeed, I don't want to see London, papa—at least not this time; I want to go back. And besides, if we were to go to London, we might not get back in time. We might miss the steamer. Oh no, dear papa! please let me stay here, where I can watch the ocean (it is the road home, you know) until we embark upon it," pleaded Lily May.

"And by the way, Arthur, would it not be best if you should see at once whether we can get passage in the next steamer? They are very crowded at this season, and state-rooms are apt to be taken long in advance," said Mrs. Powis.

"Yes, I will do so at once. And, Lily May, my pet, when we have once secured our passage, we may safely run up to London and spend two whole days there," said Mr. Powis.

And as he had now finished breakfast he left the table and went to make the necessary inquiries in person.

Mrs. Powis and Lily May withdrew their chairs from the table and went and sat within the bay-window to look down upon the unfamiliar street with its passing throngs of strange faces.

Mr. Powis went down to the office and on to the clerk's desk, around which was the usual, ever-changing little group of busy men and idlers.

Some one was asking questions of the clerk, and so Mr. Powis waited his turn.

"*Who* was it you wanted, my man?" inquired the clerk of the questioner.

"Sir William Wynne Llewellyn, sir, of Rhys-Rhydis, of Cardinganshire, Wales," answered the man, touching his hat.

Arthur Powis, with a start, turned to look at the stranger, who had named the very young baronet that was the next heir, failing Lily May, to the American Llewellyn estates. The questioner was a respectable-looking, middle-aged person, in a footman's livery.

"Sir William Wynne Llewellyn is here," answered the clerk.

"Then will you please send this note up to him, sir? It does not require any answer," said the footman, laying an unmistakable *billet-doux* upon the desk, and touching his hat as he retired.

"Did I understand you to say that Sir William Wynne Llewellyn is at present in this house?" inquired Arthur Powis.

"Yes, sir; the baronet always stops here when he comes to this city," was the reply.

Arthur Powis drew two cards from his pocket, wrote a few words in addition to his name, put the cards in a small envelope, directed it, and handed it to the clerk, saying:

"When you send the note just left with you, oblige me by sending these cards also."

"Certainly," said the clerk; and he called a waiter, and put both missives into his hand, telling him to take them to their direction.

Arthur then inquired whether all the state-rooms were taken in the Russia, that was to sail on Wednesday.

The clerk took down a duplicate diagram of the steamer that hung in the office, and examined it.

"There is a single state-room in the ladies' cabin, and a single berth in the gentlemen's saloon. That would not be accommodation enough for your party perhaps, sir?" inquired the clerk.

"Yes, since nothing better is to be had. I engage them at once," said Mr. Powis. "The ladies can have the state-room together, and I must have the single berth," he mused, as he turned from the desk.

At that moment the waiter who had carried up his cards returned.

"Sir William is not in his apartment, sir; but I left your cards and the note with his servant," said the waiter.

"Quite right; thank you," returned Mr. Powis.

And then he went up stairs to rejoin his wife and daughter.

The parlor had been cleared of the breakfast service and laid straight. And Lily May was sitting beside her mother at the open window, looking down upon the sidewalk, and clapping her hands with delight at the exhibition of Punch and Judy—a street entertainment of the most ridiculous description, with which, nevertheless, the gravest people are entertained.

Lily May stopped her lively demonstrations, to turn and inquire anxiously of her father:

"Well, papa, dear?"

"Well, I have secured passage for us, in the Russia; to the refuse of accommodation in the first cabin. You

and your mother will have a state-room forward, where, if we have rough weather, you will enjoy to the uttermost the rolling of the ship. And I have a single berth on a high shelf overlooking the cow. If the ship tosses much I shall probably come down suddenly upon Crumpie's horns."

"Oh, papa dear, we shall do very well! I don't care *how* we go, so we only *do* go. I would be willing to cross in a row-boat, if I could. But oh! *do* look out of the window at this funny old man, who is all head and half nose!"

"My dear little infant, I have seen Punch and Judy several millions of times. But now, do you listen! I have some news for you both. Gladys, love, what do you think? The kinsman that we came over to see is at this very time lodging in this very house!"

"*What*, Arthur?"

"Sir William Wynne Llewellyn is stopping here."

"Is it possible? Why, how did that happen?" exclaimed Mrs. Powis, in surprise.

"By chance, I suppose. But there is really nothing very strange in it."

"But how did you find out that he was here?" inquired Mrs. Powis.

Mr. Powis told her.

"And you sent him our cards?"

"I sent him our cards, with a few lines written upon the back of mine, telling him who we are, and that we should be happy to make his acquaintance."

"I suppose he will call on us."

"Yes. I shall stay in this morning to wait for him, as I expect him every minute."

During this conversation Lily May had turned again to watch the progress of Mr. Punch's adventures, which were now becoming exciting.

At this moment the waiter rapped, and being told to enter, came in bringing upon a small silver tray a card,

which he handed to Mr. Powis, who, scarcely glancing at it, dropped it upon the table, saying:

"Quite right. Show the gentleman in."

"Who is it?" inquired Mrs. Powis, looking up.

"Our young baronet, of course. Who else could it possibly be? We have not an acquaintance in the town."

Lily May was still deeply interested in the fortunes of Mr. Punch, whose fate was now imminent.

The door opened.

Mr. and Mrs. Powis looked up, and then arose to receive the expected visitor.

But a lady and gentleman entered.

"Mr. Arthur Powis, I presume," said the gentleman, advancing with a smiling face and outstretched hand.

Before Mr. Powis could answer, a piercing scream from the occupant of the bay window startled all the hearers, and the next minute Lily May sprang up, overturning her chair, and, straight as a bird to its nest, flew to the bosom of Owen Wynne, who caught her in his arms and pressed her to his heart.

"Oh, Owen, Owen, Owen, my dearest! thank God that you have come!" she cried, dropping her head upon his shoulder and bursting into tears of joy.

"The Lord be praised for this exceeding great happiness!" exclaimed Owen, fervently, as he bent his head down caressingly over hers.

And both forgot that there was any one else in the room.

"Oh, Owen, dearest, you followed me, did you not? Oh, I knew you would! I knew you would! though I didn't dare to say it even to myself! You followed me all this way?"

"Yes, my darling, I did—as I would have followed you all over the world and spent my life in the search until I should have found you."

"God bless you for coming, Owen, and shortening the

pain of separation. I didn't deserve it; no, I didn't deserve it. But I have been so wretched since I came away! oh, so wretched! I thought I left you for your own good, Owen. But can you ever, ever forgive me for leaving you? I know I shall never, never forgive myself."

"My darling, you could never do any thing that would require my forgiveness," replied Owen Wynne, tenderly smoothing her brown hair and fondly gazing into her sweet face.

"How pale you look, my dearest! how pale and thin and worn!" murmured Lily May, putting her hand gently on his cheek; "and it is all for *me!* for worthless *me!* Oh, what a wretch I have been! I never was worthy of your care, dearest Owen, or I never could have given you so much pain!"

"My darling, those whom we most love are sure to cause us most pain; but the pain is more than compensated by the happiness of loving and being loved, just as the agony of our separation is forgotten in the bliss of this meeting."

"But I will never leave you again, dearest Owen! or cause you a moment's uneasiness! I will stay with you and be your own faithful Lily May to the end of my life."

"I trust in Heaven that you will be so, my own dearest love! But now present me to your parents, and then speak to my sister," whispered Owen.

Lily May had utterly forgotten every one else in the world except Owen. Being reminded now that there were other inhabitants in this world, and even other occupants in this very room, Lily May, smiling through her happy tears and taking Owen's hand, presented him to her parents.

"Dear papa and mamma! this is my dearest Owen—my dearest, dearest brother, whom I have told you about so often. He has followed me across the seas! Oh, think of that, papa! I must never, never leave him again, dear mamma!" she said, eagerly, breathlessly, earnestly—giving no one a chance to utter a word in reply until she

had ceased speaking. Then she turned and warmly embraced her foster-sister, saying:

"Lily Gay, dear, you must forgive me for not seeing you just at first! Indeed I did not see anybody but Owen!"

Lily Gay kissed her, laughed for delight, kissed her again, and then dragged her off to a distant sofa, where they sat down to talk.

In the meanwhile Owen followed up his irregular introduction to Lily May's parents.

"I think myself very fortunate to have found you so soon, sir and madam. I hope that you will find some excuse for the unceremoniousness of my visit, and of——"

Owen glanced at Lily May and smiled.

"And of your reception by our daughter!" said Arthur Powis, archly.

"I have known her longer than she has known herself, sir. I have been a sort of father, or elder brother to her from her earliest infancy to the time at which she left me. And it is as such that she met me just now," said Owen, deprecatingly.

"And you, young sir! is it as a father, or an elder brother that you have followed her here?" inquired Mr. Powis.

"Yes," answered the young man, very gravely—"and—as you put the question seriously, I must answer it truthfully—as father and brother, and as one who would be still nearer and dearer to her than either, as one who would be nearest and dearest to her of all, I have followed your daughter here!"

"Mr. Wynne, I am rejoiced to welcome you, and to express my eternal gratitude for the invaluable services that you have already rendered my daughter," said Arthur Powis.

"I thank you for your kind welcome, sir. For the rest, the services of which you speak were rendered to the

dearest object of my affections, and therefore deserve no gratitude," said Owen, very earnestly.

"I do not say I thank you! but I say I will love you for your tender care of my darling child—a care to which she owes her life and all that makes her life happy—I will love you as if you were my own son," said Mrs. Powis, in a voice vibrating with emotion, as she offered him her hand.

"Dearest lady, it is the most earnest wish of my heart to be indeed your son, and to be worthy of the blessing," said Owen, as he pressed her hand to his lips.

"My Gladys," said Arthur Powis, frankly, "I think that in this young gentleman we are receiving a son-in-law! How say you?"

"I think so, too," smiled Gladys.

Owen respectfully took a hand of each and bowed deeply over them, as he answered:

"Thanks, thanks, from the depths of my heart! My proposal may have seemed sudden, presumptuous even, but you have not characterized it as such; you have generously recognized that it was justified by the circumstances."

"I should think it was *fully* justified by the circumstances," said Arthur Powis, with something between a smile and a sigh, as he glanced at the sofa where the two Lilies sat.

The eyes of Gladys followed his glance, and then turned upon Owen Wynne.

"That young lady sitting by my daughter is the sister of whom I have heard her speak so often, is she not?" she inquired.

"Yes," said Owen. "Will you allow me to present her now?"

"Certainly."

Owen arose, but Lily Gay, having heard, seen, or guessed the drift of the conversation, got up, accompanied by Lily May, and crossed the room to where Mr. and Mrs. Powis and Owen were standing.

"Mr. and Mrs. Powis, my sister, Miss Wynne," said Owen.

Lily Gay executed her best Ladies' College courtesy.

Arthur bowed and shook hands with her.

Gladys kissed her on both cheeks, and said:

"I am quite sure that we shall be good friends, my dear."

Then all the circle re-seated themselves in and near the bay window.

"You came over in search of this young lady. You have found her, and found, I hope, a satisfactory welcome from her parents," began Mr. Powis.

Owen bowed and smiled.

"But, by the way, it surprises me to discover that you knew her parents."

"And so it does me, dearest Owen, though it seemed so natural that I did not at first wonder at it," put in Lily May.

"Why, we ourselves did not know it until we were half way across the ocean, when the child told us her little story—though, doubtless, it was a natural instinct that led us to protect her in the first instance," continued Mr. Powis.

"I never, certainly, even suspected who were the parents of Lily May until she was nearly grown up, and I never had my suspicions confirmed until very recently, in fact until a few days before I sailed. *How* they were confirmed, I do not wish to explain in this first happy hour of our meeting. But a little later I will place in your hands a packet, of which I am the bearer, which will put you in the possession of all the facts of the case, and afford you legal proof of the identity of your child, if such proof is needed," said Owen.

"Yes; such legal proof *is* wanted, and my mind is relieved of a great anxiety by hearing that you have it in your possession; for though not the least shadow of a doubt rests upon our own minds that Lily May is our own child;

yet, where the inheritance of a large estate is concerned, it is well to have the most unquestionable evidence of the fact," said Mr. Powis.

"I can assure you that the proofs are all conclusive," replied Owen.

Mrs. Powis had listened with interest to this part of the conversation, but had taken no share in it.

Mr. Powis now remembered that he had engaged passage for himself and party in the Russia, that was to sail on Wednesday for New York. But seeing, under the changed circumstances, no necessity for so speedy a return, he looked at Owen and said:

"Let us come to some understanding about our immediate movements. Now that you have accomplished the object of your voyage, what are your present plans?"

Owen smiled as he answered:

"I am a merchant, and I have never been able entirely to separate business from pleasure, or duty from inclination, or the strongest attractions of social life from—the 'main chance.' So it follows that now, when I have crossed the ocean only to see Lily May, I am charged with an important commission by my seniors of the firm, which will detain me over here for some weeks."

"Ah! and now for our plans," said Mr. Powis. Then, turning to his daughter, he asked: "Lily May, my darling, shall we go home by the Russia, on Wednesday?"

"Oh, no, no, no, papa!" Lily May answered, energetically, for she was much too pure, frank and earnest in her tone for any of the pretty little airs, affectations and insincerities of girlhood.

"But we have paid our passage-money. Shall we forfeit it?" inquired Mr. Powis, with an arch smile.

"Oh, yes, yes, yes, papa! *What's money?*" exclaimed Lily May, with that heroic scorn of the "filthy" which is most felt by those who never earned a dollar and never knew the want of one.

Lilies that day, there was none so great as that she conferred upon them in making them her almoners.

At five o'clock they returned, refreshed, happy, and expectant, to meet Mr. Powis and Owen at dinner.

The two gentlemen joined them, looking entirely relieved and contented. Their private interview had evidently been a satisfactory one.

The afternoon passed pleasantly. And in the evening they all went together to hear a celebrated lecturer.

By appointment, on Sunday the whole party went to church to hear a popular preacher; and after the services were over, they adjourned to the Adelphi, where the Powises remained for the rest of the day as the guests of the Wynnes.

They arranged to see the lions of Liverpool on Monday, and to go up to London together on Tuesday.

It happened, however, on Monday morning, as Mr. and Mrs. Powis and Lily May were sitting in their private parlor waiting for the arrival of Owen and Lily Gay, a card was brought in by the waiter.

"At last," said Mr. Powis, with a smile.

"Who is it?" inquired Mrs. Powis.

"Sir William Wynne Llewellyn," answered Mr. Powis. Then turning to the waiter, he said, "Show the gentleman up."

A few moments elapsed, and then the door was rather pompously thrown open by the waiter, who in a sonorous voice announced:

"Sir William Wynne Llewellyn."

And the young baronet entered.

Lily May could scarcely repress a start and exclamation, so much did he resemble Owen, except that he was somewhat fuller in form and fairer in face.

Mr. Powis advanced to meet him, welcomed him warmly, and introduced him to Mrs. and Miss Powis.

"I have so few relatives in the world that I should be

inexcusable for neglecting an opportunity of making the acquaintance of one of them; and so I should have responded at once to your note had I been here. But the fact is, I ran down to Chester on Saturday morning, and did not get back till last night," said the baronet.

"CHESTER!" involuntarily exclaimed Lily May; and then she blushed at having "spoken out in meeting."

"Yes," answered Sir William, very softly, turning and bowing blandly to the young lady.

"Chester seems a familiar name to you, my love," observed Mr. Powis.

"Oh, it is, papa dear! It is the place in Wales where Doctor Wynne, Owen's father, came from," said Lily May.

"Wynne? I had near relatives, or rather, I should say, *one* near relative who went from Chester to settle in America, some years ago. He was my father's elder brother, and his name was Hugh Wynne."

"That was Owen's father!" exclaimed Lily May, impulsively.

"Owen!" echoed the baronet, softly and doubtfully.

"Mr. Owen Wynne, a wealthy young merchant of New York, and the son of the late Doctor Hugh Wynne, formerly of Chester, in Wales. I have no doubt, from what I have just heard, and also from the remarkably strong family likeness there is between you, that he is the son of your father's brother," said Mr. Powis.

"If this is so, then I have no right to the title I now wear. The young gentleman you mention would, as the son of my father's elder brother, take precedence of me in the succession," said Sir William, in a very grave tone.

"I do not think," said Mr. Powis, smiling, "that Owen Wynne would ever be disposed to disturb you in the possession of your title. He is a self-made man, a merchant prince, prouder of the position that he has attained by his own talents, industry, and perseverance than he would be of a dukedom inherited from others. Besides, he is the

citizen of a country where titles are not recognized. I am glad, however, that he is of your family, since he is about to become a member of my own."

The young baronet bowed gravely, glanced at Lily May, who was blushing beautifully, and then bowed again.

"And, by the way," said Mrs. Powis, "if Owen Wynne is the first cousin of Sir William, then Owen bears the same relation to us that Sir William does."

"Certainly, they are both our kinsmen in a remote degree. And by the way, here comes the young gentleman himself with his sister," said Mr. Powis, who, standing at the window, saw Owen and Lily Gay pass by and enter the house.

And a few minutes afterward they were announced and entered the room. They shook hands with Mr. and Mrs. Powis and Lily May, and then turned and bowed courteously to the stranger who was with them.

Mr. Powis was smiling to himself. Not upon any account would he have missed doing the honors of the ensuing introductions; so, turning towards the young people, he slightly waived his hand and said:

"Sir William, I have great pleasure in presenting to you your kinsman, Mr. Owen Wynne, of New York. Owen, my dear boy, this is your cousin, Sir William Wynne Llewellyn, of Chester. Sir William—Miss Wynne."

There were bows, courtesies and hand-shakings. And then the baronet, smiling blandly and speaking softly as was his custom, said:

"I am happy to make the acquaintance of my kinsman and my fair kinswoman, and to welcome them both to England."

"Thanks, Sir William," replied Owen. "We are equally happy to know you. But I doubt whether we may claim kinsmen's right to your regard. Our father was of Chester, it is true; but of very humble parentage; *his* father having been only a druggist and chemist of that town."

"Exactly—the druggist and chemist in question was my grandfather and yours. His eldest son, Evan, died unmarried; his second son, Hugh, long lost sight of by the family, appears to have been your father; his third son, Griffith, killed in the Crimean War, was my father. And if, instead of talking about 'humble parentage,' you had spoken of 'humble circumstances,' you would have told the truth of our family. We were in *very* humble circumstances until quite recently, when, by the death of old Sir Griffith Grizzley Llewellyn without direct heirs, the baronetcy devolved upon me, a remote kinsman, yet supposed to be the next of kin and heir-at-law. On succeeding to the title I resumed the name and arms of Llewellyn. If, however, you are, as I firmly believe you to be, the son of my father's elder brother, then it is certain that I have no right to the title that I bear; and *you* are Sir Owen Wynne," said the baronet, gravely.

Owen had been listening to him attentively and reading his character accurately; and had seen and appreciated the honesty that led him to this avowal, and the pain that it cost him to make it; so he smiled cordially as he grasped the hand of the young baronet and answered:

"My sister and myself are proud and happy to claim you as our cousin; for until this day we had believed ourselves to be, in the matter of kindred, alone in the world. But as for the title in question between us—I have neither the will nor the power to deprive you of it. I am by nature and by education a merchant, and a citizen of a republic where titles are unknown. I neither could nor would wear yours. Long may you enjoy it in honor and peace."

"I told you so!" said Mr. Powis.

Then he mentioned that his party were going that day to see all that was to be seen in Liverpool, and he invited Sir William to accompany them.

The young baronet willingly accepted the invitation.

The beautiful Lily Gay had already fascinated him, so

that his eyes were seldom off her face, when they could rest there unobserved.

They went out in two open carriages—Mr. and Mrs. Powis and Lily May occupying one, and Sir William, Owen and Lily Gay the other.

They spent a pleasant day, and dined together at the Queen's Hotel.

In the course of dinner Mr. Powis mentioned that their whole party were going up to London the next morning; whereupon Sir William suddenly discovered that *he* had very important business in that city that required his immediate personal attention. And thus it was arranged that he should accompany them on their journey.

And from that time Sir William Wynne Llewellyn attached himself to the party of Mr. Powis, and went with them, not only to London, but to Wales, to Scotland and to Ireland

At the end of two weeks they returned again to London.

And there at St. George's Church, Hanover Square, by the Right Reverend the Bishop of Broadlawn, assisted by the Very Reverend the Dean of Dunover, Owen Wynne, Esq., of New York, was united in the holy bonds of matrimony to Mary, only daughter of Arthur Powis, Esq., of Kader Idrys, Virginia.

"The fair bride" (thus the Court Journal) "was attended to the altar by the beautiful and accomplished Miss Wynne, the sister of the bridegroom, who was himself attended by Sir William Wynne Llewellyn, as best man."

"After the ceremony, the wedding party was entertained at an elegant breakfast by the parents of the bride, at their apartments in the Morley House. In the afternoon the happy pair left town for Dover, *en route* for the Continent."

When Owen Wynne and his bride set out upon their wedding tour, Lily Gay was left behind, in the care of Mr. and Mrs. Powis, who immediately took her with them to Brighton, where they proposed to spend the autumn.

Sir William Wynne Llewellyn followed them down there, and took apartments in the same hotel with themselves—"The Bedford." And he spent as much time with them as he possibly could, without becoming glaringly intrusive. He talked, read and sung with Lily Gay in-doors. And he walked, rode and drove with her out-doors. Lily Gay honestly tried to keep him at a distance whenever she could do so, without being rude. But she could not keep off his proposal; for in despite of all gentle discouragements from the young girl he determined to put his hope "to the test, and win or lose it all," and so he asked her to become Lady Llewellyn, and *lost* it; for she thanked him for the honor he had done her, and informed him that she was engaged to a young medical student who was the intimate friend of her brother, and to whom she was to be married as soon as she should return home, by which time he was expected to receive his diploma.

Shocked and disgusted at the idea of his being set aside in favor of a young undergraduate, the baronet accepted his congé and retired into Wales.

About the middle of November the young married couple rejoined their friends, and the whole party took passage on the Norwegia, bound for New York, and returned home.

Every thing was well prepared for their reception.

Owen had written full instructions to his agents, and they had followed them faithfully.

In one of the finest streets at the west end of the city, a handsome house, elegantly furnished, with old Nancy installed as housekeeper, at the head of a skilful retinue of servants, was ready to receive the bride and bridegroom.

Old Mr. Spicer was in town, and had done his part in making preparations for his own young couple. He had sold out his business and retired on an ample fortune. He had purchased a brown-stone mansion in Owen's immediate neighborhood, furnished it splendidly, and installed himself and his son in it. Willie had graduated, and they were

only waiting for the return of Lily Gay to complete their happiness.

The second marriage took place at Christmas at Grace Church, and the young pair made a bridal trip to Washington. There they were joined by Mr. and Mrs. Powis and Mr. and Mrs. Wynne.

But more than all the gayeties of the nation's capital, our friends enjoyed a quiet evening at a suburban house called Ceres Cottage, where they took tea with three quaint old maiden ladies, whose name was Crane.

And in the course of this visit, the fact transpired that Owen and Lily Gay were grand-nephew and niece to the old ladies, being the grandchildren of their youngest sister.

Before our friends took final leave of Ceres Cottage, the Miss Cranes were made comfortable for life.

Early in March our whole party returned to New York. Each wedded pair retired to their own happy home, to enjoy the manifold blessings that spring from good lives, pure affections and perfect union.

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